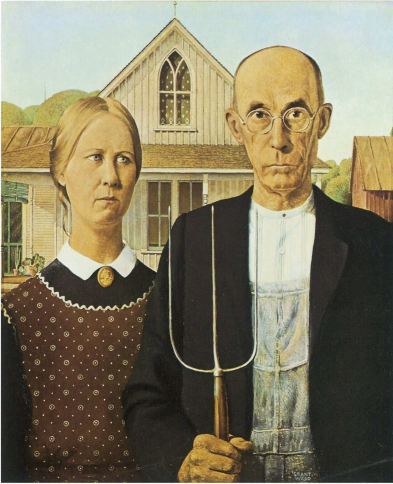


# A Traditional Christian's Guide to the Family in Modern Times



Survival tips for those families that attempt to live for Christ in a world designed to draw people away, live for self, and hate God.

Navigating away from the snares of the past and present to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, 2 Corinthians 6:17a



## Preface

Christian homeschool families may see in the ministry of the Pearls (Michael and Debbie) an advocacy for traditional values that the larger secular world (and even some Christians) have repudiated. Some have finished raising their children while others are just starting. It can be a useful exercise to consider some of the difficulties that can be encountered in trying to raise children to have traditional values and resist the many corrupting influences in the world.

We have raised our children and like most at our stage of life wish we had known more and done better. Like many, we were pretty ignorant, not even knowing what we didn't know. We were open to taking classes like "Growing Kids God's Way" and always looking for a nugget or two of information that we could use for our family.

We relocated to a rural area when our oldest was eight. In addition to not knowing much about child raising, we also did not know much about gardening or animal husbandry. We did a lot of experiments and slowly over the years began to compile information (both agricultural and family) that hopefully will give our children a "leg up" over where we started. I wrote this booklet in an attempt to share observations that would have been helpful for us when we started our family and hopefully may contain a useful "nugget" or two for others who may be closer to the beginning of their journey.

Since most people are born into and grow up in families, it might seem unnecessary to write about a subject that almost everyone assumes they know. However, since we live at a time when so much damage has been inflicted on families, it may be helpful to take a step back and look at the historical family, the damage done, and what steps might be available to undo some of the damage. To this end this book is written.

Up until a little over 100 years ago, most families in the US lived as had families throughout the world and history. These were large both in breadth (siblings and cousins) and depth (generations). In addition, families were usually located in one geographical area as community. While there may still be some families that continue this tradition, most seeking traditional family life are attempting to construct it in a world hostile to their efforts and without much of the information both about obstacles to expect and what can and should be done.

For the Christian who would like to guide his family towards some of what has been lost, he will need to be familiar with more than a romanticized or nostalgic view of the traditional family. He needs a practical understanding of large family dynamics as well as the challenges imposed by modern life. The reader should be cautioned as Paul writes Timothy that all who would live godly (piety) will be persecuted (2Tim 3:12). The desire to guide a family to a more godly life will result in people being offended and even acting against you (perhaps within your own family).

The phrase in 2 Timothy translated “shall suffer persecution” is from the Greek word *dioko* and means to put to flight or being made to flee. The implication here is that anyone trying to live a godly life can expect a negative reaction from the rest of the world. In a way, there is an advantage in modern life in that most people are not known well enough to be reviled.

Satan sets the course of the world (Eph 2:2). One might attribute to Satan both the increasing abandonment of Christianity as well as the apparent impoverishment of the family. It might seem that the artificial construct of “society” could have been given momentum to replace family as it can be more easily directed by Satan. A researcher named Stanley Milgram conducted experiments (in an attempt to learn why so many people implemented Nazi policies) and discovered that about 85% of people would torture others when told to by authority figures. As a result, one might expect that the social currents of modern society have been directed to operate against those seeking traditional values.

Christians just starting a family might consider that high density population centers (concentrated societal influence) may not be the most welcoming environment. Perhaps not yet as bad as Sodom, these locations can make it difficult to thrive.

Each family has to make choices and face individual circumstances that can be limiting. One might wish to have many options from which to select such as employment, location, and proximity to other families seeking a more traditional life. Often choices are limited and one finds that one has to make do with whatever is available. Perhaps even more than financial restrictions are the limits on time. Traditionally, families had a home business in which the children grew up participating. This may have been the family farm or a shop in town. Today usually one parent has a full time job (including commute time) that limits what is available for the family.

In order to make the most of what is often limited time, parents need to have a good idea of what their children need to learn and how to teach it. This means that parents need to learn themselves. For example, in deciding how much home entertainment (books, movies, TV shows, games, etc.) to allow their children. It can be helpful to consider that one enters into artificially created worlds when being immersed in entertainment. These worlds are crafted to be enticing and can be both seductive and corruptive to the point where real life can be seen as so burdensome as to be avoided. In addition, one comes to be imprinted with worldly values. Some parents avoid these worldly influences while others use them to teach their children what to avoid and why. These are not easy choices, but are best made when parents have a more complete understanding of the effects.

## Modern Human development

We are all born selfish, ignorant, and helpless. Our initial helplessness may be designed to get new parents to set aside some of their own selfishness to care for another.

Many secularists think that humanity is evolving towards a social utopia. They fail to understand that humanity is doomed because of our intrinsic selfishness. As Christians we have the opportunity to transcend our natural selfishness. This is called walking after the Spirit instead of the flesh (Galatians chapter 5).

Much of parental instruction consists of taking steps to teach children how to make use of self-discipline (often through the application of external discipline). Christian parents can give their children an extra advantage. Teaching them to trust in the gospel (1Cor 15:1-4) gives them access to the possibility of not only resisting selfishness through self-discipline, but transcending it by walking by the Spirit.

The difference between walking by the flesh (selfishness) and walking by the Spirit (selflessness) can be seen in the biblical definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 which is essentially selflessness. That this is the goal of the Christian life can be seen in 2 Corinthians 5:15. It is also the result of the Holy Spirit working in us (Gal 5:22-24). The Christian parent has an important role to play in showing their children how to live the full Christian life in addition developing the skills of self-discipline.

In his Outline of History, H.G. Wells writes, trying to help the reader understand the perversity of the Roman emperors, to consider how they themselves would have turned out if every whim and wish they had from the time they were children was instantly gratified. Most can imagine how damaging this would be to an individual but often fail to see a similar effect of the Dr. Spock book on child care advocating minimal discipline that was popular in the 1950s.

Even before mobility is obtained, infants as young as six months can be taught to use sign language to communicate such as words for, "more", "please", and "thank you". This sort of early start in communication helps a child look to their parent as a key source of instruction.

As infants grow into toddlers, they acquire skills in mobility and perception such that whatever attracts their attention can become a target of acquisition. This can bring them into conflict with other toddlers that might want the same things. At this point parental discipline and instruction begins to shape, restrict, and mold the character of the child. Self-discipline, delayed gratification, sensitivity to others, and many other character qualities are developed starting this early. Neglect of this sort of instruction can be a severe handicap often resulting in an adult with difficulty resisting his own selfish and self-destructive desires.

A child who grows up with little application of external discipline to help him develop self-discipline may find that societal consequences such as prison will apply a degree of discipline. Self-discipline allows the adult to have more options in life than being a slave to his desires. One might wonder to what degree alcoholism, drug addiction, or philandery might be attributed to a lack of self-discipline.

As a child leaves toddlerhood, he becomes increasingly able to connect the “why” of things to his understanding of his discipline encounters. Obedience based rule following is an opportunity to develop self-discipline, however, it is a shallow way to go through the rest of life. To navigate better life’s complexities requires the application of principles. For example, instead of relying on self-discipline to suppress annoyance, choosing instead to lovingly forebear. At this stage only the rudimentary skills can be observed, but it is essential to establish this foundation so that it can be built upon.

This is the beginning of being able to apply a philosophy, ethics, or religion to one’s life. Some parents stop at the “Because I told you to” stage because it seems easier. Attempting to apply a rule following approach to parenting beyond the early stage can make a child rebel or acquiesce, either of which can lead to a disconnection of the child from parents. A parent can tell a child not to touch the top of the stove.

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These sort of assessments constitute the calculus of life. We all have to make cost / benefit considerations. For example a teenager that wants a car so he can go to a minimum wage job may discover that his car expenses may exceed his anticipated salary. This can be disappointing, but educational. In a way, this is an expansion of the “why” of things. A child who has been only exposed only to a rule based environment may be deficient in the skills needed to make assessments.

The college age is a difficult one. Mark Twain is reported to have said that when he was 17 he couldn't believe how stupid his father was and when he was 21, he couldn't believe how much his father had learned in four years. While a one or two year old can feel confident of his new found ability to walk, it can't come close to the confidence of an 18 year old to chart his own course through life.

Perhaps because parents insulate their children from some of the many more painful life encounters that can deflate pride, their children often have exaggerated confidence of what they can expect from life. That Satan has selected this age group for his most intensive indoctrination speaks to their particular vulnerability. Here a distinction should be made between education and learning. Learning is what an individual does. Education is what is done to the individual. The draftee of this age who is sent into combat often finds his faith, while his contemporary in college often loses his.

Public education usually harms children in that for twelve years they are told to take in what they are told and remember it long enough to be tested. This tends to foster an unquestioning reception of information, inhibit critical thinking and questioning, and produce a general apathy and a specific resistance to hearing anything sounding like a lecture. Sadly, most of Christianity is practiced as surrounding a lecture / sermon.



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Even those whose parents did not adequately prepare them such that they took a wrong turn here or there can still come to paths of recovery.

## The Traditional Family

Up until the 1920s most people grew up, lived, and died where they were born. Families had both breadth (multiple siblings and cousins) and depth (multi generational) as well as geographical continuity. This started to drastically change with common access to the automobile and birth control. Also in the 1920s the population of the US shifted from mostly rural to mostly urban.

Being raised in a traditional family was sometimes considered stifling, repressive, and could even be abusive. The allure of money, freedom, and easy living often drew people away from their families to more anonymous urban living. If one is known by an entire village everyday of one's life, there is little that can be hid. The spread of the early church even in times of persecution might be attributed to the undeniable change that occurred in someone who became a Christian. A shrewish wife could become loving and submissive or a drunken husband could become sober and caring. Today most are not known well enough to conclude if there has been any change or not.

Humans in close proximity sometimes verify the saying "familiarity breeds contempt". However, most people would gravitate to those siblings and cousins with whom one could find greater compatibility. The depth of these sort of lifelong friendships are not often encountered in today's more superficial relationships.

The absence of on demand entertainment as well as a generally slower pace of life allowed for a much greater integration of one generation into another. As children grew, speculation as to which "matches" might evolve would be observed over time.

This would not be so much an “arranged marriage” but the likely outcome of people who had come to know each other well and the advice and suggestions of the older generation that also knew them well, loved them, and wished the best for them..

Technology provided the opportunity for many to “escape” the traditional family. This was seen as advantageous because without Christ, the family can be a pressure cooker of discontent. However, with Christ and the transformation of a selfish life into one of selflessness and love, one can find with the traditional family a life of happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment.

The Christian who wishes to build a traditional family and resist the destructive elements set in motion by Satan needs to be aware of many elements that will have to be dealt with. For this reason a review of these elements can be useful.

### Collectivization

Since Satan cannot be everywhere at once, he needs to leverage his influence through hierarchical systems. As a result, we can see in history the inexorable increase of schools, governments, corporations, and even churches into organizational systems mechanical in nature and designed to process people as components. One aspect of this collectivization is to get people more inclined to act and think as they are told.

Some see this societal transformation as the advance of communism or socialism. Often Capitalism is seen as the opposite of socialism, however, while an individual can save his money (capital) to start his own business, he is often put out of business by the joint stock corporation (which is an economic collective). Corporations suffer from competition and the tendency to become bureaucracies. As a result, they often cartelize by means of inviting government involvement. This merges the corporate and government collectives.

As family businesses are extinguished and employment becomes increasingly available only through government or corporations, those seeking to build a traditional family may find that their options are more limited. It is also useful to understand that the world we live in is in the process of being transformed to produce a population that is compliant and malleable to fit into the global world Satan hopes to control.

The reduction of life to the mechanical that collectivism seems to represent can be seen to offer an overly simplistic way of family life. Many parents in the post WWII 1950s anticipated that placing their children in public school and in Sunday School was all that was needed to have them come out at the end of the “assembly line” complete. The sex, drugs, and rock and roll of the 1960s tended to show that expectation was unrealistic.

The mechanical nature of a collective tends to work towards a single objective. Human life consists of a complexity that is not well suited to reduction. This can be seen in human relationships. Using a church as an example, a sermon can be useful, but real growth in faith comes from a relationship such as might be seen with Paul and Timothy. Classroom instruction was not common until 150 years ago. Prior to that most learning was accomplished through apprenticeship type relationships. In a way, collectives and relationships are opposites.

Considering that Christianity is supposed to be about relationships (us with God and each other), it would seem that a collective would be the wrong tool to use. Even more so a family would suffer if run as a collective. It is not uncommon today to see the “modern” family consisting of two parents and up to two children each with their own job or school, friends, activities, and interests using their home as a sort of boarding house while they each go their own way. The diminishment of the ties that bind impoverishes them all. Without diversions, distractions, and entertainment, the pain of such a shallow life would be excruciating.

## Media

Some say the Spanish American war was provoked through “yellow journalism” by which is meant that newspapers in particular incited people to demand a war. The control of information allows people to be directed fairly easily. At its core the media present themselves as dispensers of “truth”. Even fiction (books, movies, radio, and TV) create believable scenarios that influence how people see “reality”. As familial and other relationships diminish, being surrounded with imaginary characters becomes a sort of substitute for real relationships.

An interview of one reporter referring to the election campaign of 1960 commented that he had been assigned to travel with the Kennedy campaign while his friend had been assigned to travel with the Nixon campaign. In teasing his friend about his poor luck being stuck with Nixon, his friend had replied, “I think I can do Jack (Kennedy) more good there”. One might see these “change agents” in terms of Communist conspiracy, agents of Satan, or arrogant manipulators. However, a more accurate assessment might be seen by considering how people view truth.

For the Christian, truth is absolute, unchangeable, and is found in God and the bible. For those who do not believe in God, truth is a little more fluid. Often it is found in what needs to be done or said to get what one wants. This accounts for the increasing popularity of relativism. A historian once described political liberalism as secularized Christianity. One is left with the idea that one should be “good” without an idea of what that is or how to do it.

Most of the people in the media are notoriously atheistic. It should not then be a surprise that the information they disseminate is done in such a way as to accomplish their objectives. For Christians the best defense against misleading information is the ability to discern truth. This skill is one that has to be exercised (Heb 5:14).

The danger with fictional media is that warm welcoming environments are intentionally constructed and that can seem much more attractive than the real world. If one identifies with the protagonist, one can overcome obstacles and reach a happy conclusion. In a way, these characters and adventures influence how we see life. Real people can seem disappointing after associating with invented ones. Children in particular can fail to develop some of the social skills necessary to deal with difficult people. Like with news media, the negative effects of fiction can be greatly reduced if one makes progress in cultivating discernment.

Music is a form of media that can also have negative effects. Music evokes emotion and for those more sensitive it can almost be addictive. The bible describes a healthy direction of music stimulated emotion with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19). Marijuana was called a “gateway” drug because it was believed that its use led people to harder drug use. Perhaps a better understanding can be found in those who are given over to self-stimulation of any sort (including music) representing a spectrum of indulgence. For these, an emphasis in childhood of developing self-discipline would have been helpful.

Christian parents can see that helping their children develop discernment and self-discipline is essential to have a chance of resisting some of the worldly forces Satan has set loose targeting their family. Of all the forms of attack, media can be the most pernicious. It can disguise itself as truth, seduce one with flattery, or offer pleasurable indulgences. It can twist one’s thinking and exploit one’s emotions.

## School

Many Christian parents have already taken advantage of the opportunity to teach their children at home. What many discover is that what is called “education” is somewhat of a fraud. One does not have to have special training to teach.

The basic dynamic is that brighter children will learn more than dim ones. For a public school teacher to claim credit for the learning a brighter child accomplishes but blame the dimmer one for “failing” is shameful.

Given access to information, most children will learn on their own. Their parents can foster an eagerness to learn that is often quenched in public school. Because a public school is run as a machine, children are processed as components. They are expected to take in what is transmitted to them and not disrupt the process by asking questions. In selecting subjects to teach a parent may wish to include some that are more difficult or that the child has less interest in. It can be beneficial to add a subject that is difficult as a practice method for learning how to tackle difficult subjects. More than the particular subject, the learning of how to marshal resources to accomplish difficult tasks is of value.

Age segregation is another hurdle for children to overcome. This can severely inhibit the ability to converse with those older or younger as exposure is often quite limited. This can foster a herding instinct that can be seen on Saturdays in a shopping mall as several teenage girls cluster together almost as a single multi-legged organism. Creating peer dependency might otherwise be seen as child abuse.

Being told to “shut up, sit down, and do what you are told” for 12 years can have the permanent effect of obtaining compliance and quenching inquiry and evaluative abilities. Using public education to effectively mentally “castrate” most children was seen as desirable by many of those in the 1800s who saw a benefit from such homogenization, especially as preparing children to work in factory collectives.

Some Christian parents declare that they leave their children in school to act as sort of “missionaries”. This may be optimistic or delusional as the warning about “bad company” seems to best indicate who will be influencing who (1Cor 15:33). Perhaps nothing defines a family as much as children.

Being able to protect them from Satan's schemes should be a first priority.

## Church

Many Christians view their church as a bastion from which protection from the world may be safely obtained. This may not be the case for all churches. Some embrace the world and advocate for all of the issues such as abortion, LGBTQ, and political activism. These often have a low view of God and a high view of themselves and see their "Christian" life as dedicated to bringing what they call "social justice" to the world.

There can be three main categories of problems for churches. The first are doctrines, the second are personalities, and the third is structure. Most churches operate as collectives which emphasize the process over the people. Sermons, classes, events, programs, and activities can define a church structure and seem to process people, but a deepening relationship with God and each other often seems irrelevant to church busyness.

Denominational churches seem to offer a "package" of doctrine that is presented as complete such that the church member is required to accept the package. There is little left for the church member to do as he is often told that smart people have already discovered all of the truth. This is at odds with the biblical perspective of each church member maturing in faith, growing in knowledge, and walking by the Spirit.

Many church traditions develop a sort of inertia that keeps them going in the same direction and doing the same things. Christian parents may need to seek out individual learning from older wiser Christians who clearly show the light and love of Christ in their lives as opposed to trying to get all that they need for the Christian life out of the somewhat mechanical nature of an organizational church system.



Some churches measure their “success” in terms of growth, income, or prominence. A more accurate measure might be the degree to which the members are each becoming more like Christ. Since most churches do not know how to make this happen, most churches might be seen as failures. This leaves the parents trying to establish a traditional Christian family at a real disadvantage as they are going to have to learn how to compensate for the lack of effective Christian instruction.

## Money

Rockefeller was to have said when asked “how much money is enough”, “Always a little bit more”. The rich man in the bible that could not completely trust in Jesus because he was rich (Luke 18:23) gives us an example of how difficult it is to surrender a trust in riches. A person with money knows that it is powerful and can be used to accomplish much. As a result, it can be difficult to even remember God much less trust in him more (Deut 6:10-12, Matt 13:22). Proverbs describes the need for a balance in dealing with money (Prov 30:8-9).

Our approach to money and its use reflects a lot of what is in our heart. The desire for more money to get things can reflect a covetousness that is idolatry (Col 3:5). It may be seen as the way to pursue a variety of consumptive indulgences. It may provide the means to express vanity and pride. It can also reveal a fear and lack of trust in God.

We are told that some lusting after money pierce themselves with sorrows (1Tim 6:9-10). In a world where the economy has been crafted to promote the industrialization that facilitates collectivization, family businesses are not able to compete. For example, in agriculture the family dairy farm has all but disappeared. Some dairies now have over 100,000 cows and are worked by illegal labor rather similar to the old South plantation systems.

Similarly, those who used to work for a family hardware store, family pharmacy, or family grocery store now find themselves having to work at Walmart.

For a Christian family trying to make a living, often one may have to look to the fringe of the economy. Manufacturing used to offer a number of jobs but most manufacturing companies either went out of business or shifted their location to countries that would exploit their own population as “wage slaves”.

Most Christian families are unable to run a family business that would allow them to “apprentice” their own children to continue the business. As a result, one usually seeks employment of some kind working for a collective. Even with only one parent out of the home for eight to ten hours a day, families are faced with a handicap that can approach the damage caused by fatherless homes. Families with both parents employed outside the home can surpass that damage done to their children such as seen with higher incidents of drug abuse, suicide, promiscuity, and incarceration.

## Birth Control

Perhaps more than anything else the effects of parental absence illustrate the importance of parental involvement with their children. If Christian parents want a traditional family, they do not practice birth control. If children are from the Lord (Ps 127:3), practicing birth control is like saying “no” to God. While many see in surgical abortion a great tragedy, they may not be aware that the use of oral contraceptives effectively abort many more babies.

The killing or prevention of children is usually done for economic reasons or that of convenience. Considering that the demands of raising children are a primary means of getting people to let go of some of their selfishness, it seems reasonable that Satan would apply many of his resources towards getting people to not have them.

For Christian parents, having the children that God would give them generally means having to live more economically than one might expect. Having the number of children that God would give can consume more than financial resources, there is often little time available for anything else. This is not necessarily bad. Having less time for leisure, recreation, and entertainment often helps one make more profitable investment in relationships.

Simply having children at all begins a process of taking parents out of themselves. Having as large a family as God would give almost completes the process as there can seem little time for oneself. The goal of the Christian life is to become more like Jesus (Eph 4:13). This requires us to surrender our selfishness (2Cor 5:15). Just as Christ gave his life for us, parents of full families surrender their lives for their children. Those unable to have children are even more able to serve others.

The “persecution” (the animosity those of the world have towards those who would live godly) a large family might expect can be moderated sometimes by locating to an area of low population density. In addition, rural areas are often the ones most likely to offer housing affordable at the lower end of the financial spectrum. The rural option can be attractive for other reasons as well such as the character building effects of farm chores and animal care that can be had even on a small acreage.

### The Isolated family

The traditional family used to exist among a community of traditional families. To attempt to create a traditional family and family life today often means having to live without the integration of other traditional families because of geographic distances. Most traditional families of the past did not consciously consider how they lived. Often they were carried along by the traditions and cultural inertia of those they lived amongst. This reliance on the currents of convention is how many Christian families are carried into the world today.

Not being able to rely on the social currents of convention to shape family practice can be an advantage in that each family is more free to choose their particular way to live the Christian life. This requires a degree of intentional decision making that most traditional families never had to face. However, it can also be a way to delve deeper into the Christian life that most traditional families of the past seldom explored.

The father in a family that is seeking a traditional way of life has some particular difficulties. Often he is not able to get from his own father all that he would like in guidance and instruction. He may not even know of anyone whose counsel would be advantageous. It can be somewhat obvious to identify those worldly elements that should be avoided. However, it can be a little more difficult to identify that which should be embraced. In a world of “broken cisterns” (Jer 2:13), where can one find “water”?

A compounding problem is that the father of a traditional family may not even know what he doesn’t know. Even if he were inclined to be out “beating the bushes” for information, he may not know where to look, what to ask, or who might be of help. It is to touch on the subjects of what obstacles in the world are challenges as well as what might be done within a family to aid in child rearing that this booklet is written. It does not have all the answers, but can be a starting point upon which to build.

### Children are different

When the theory of evolution was first promulgated, people like Margaret Sanger and Adolph Hitler took up the challenge to improve society by insuring that those who were unfit (or even inconvenient) would not live to pass on their negative attributes. When these ideas become briefly unpopular, many then considered that human development was solely the result of developmental influences. Sadly, what has been presented as the scientific result of academic rigor has often proved to be nothing more than Satanic strategies.

In reality, a child has a soul which provides memory, perception, and personality as well as a body which moves, senses, and speaks. There is variability in personality from shy to bold, active to passive, and curious to accepting. In terms of physiology (the body) there can be variability as well. For example, what was called Aspergers and is now called autism is a more sensitive, faster, or complex neurology the result of which presents a child with an avalanche of sensory information that can be difficult to process in a timely fashion. Often a diagnosis of some disorder or disability is in reality a personality or physiological variant that makes the industrial processing of a child in a public school collective more difficult.

A parent is in a position to understand and work with the various characteristics of his child. A child who is introverted or shy should not be encouraged to “be” different, but can be encouraged to develop the skills to call upon boldness if it is required. Similarly the child who is more aggressive can be shown how to exercise restraint when it is called for. Being able to “read” a situation and accurately determine what is called for is another skill to develop.

It is perhaps the variability of children that makes the raising of Christian children in a traditional family significantly different and more rewarding than the worldly public education for the one or two children in a small secular family. The collectivized world sees differences as defects (The nail that stands up is hammered down). Ironically claiming “diversity”, they often apply pressure for conformity. Helping an individual child recognize his own characteristic strengths and weaknesses as well as those of others can help him navigate the waters of true diversity.

An employee once asked why he wasn’t assigned a particular job. It was explained to him that because of his short attention span, he couldn’t be assigned a job that would take more than 15 minutes because he would get distracted and start to fool around and get into trouble.

The employee recognized that this was true and accepted the fact that this was why his work assignments were brief. The parents of this young man should have been observant of this characteristic and worked to help their child to develop the self-discipline to marshal his attention for tasks lasting longer than 15 minutes. His native personality might not lend itself to long duration tasks, but developing skills to stretch one's abilities can still be useful.

Children can have a wide variety of intellectual, musical, artistic, and athletic skills. Often Christianity is presented as a complex set of doctrines that only smart people can understand. Ironically, many smart people have been tricked into a sort of pseudo Christianity that fuels pride and diverts them from actually becoming like Christ. Regardless of whatever skills or lack of skills, Parents need to work with each child to, each in their own way, work towards greater Christ-likeness.

### Parental Consistency

With most husbands working outside the home most early parental discipline comes from mothers, especially for younger children. It is not unusual to hear exasperated mothers of young children trying to correct behavior in a public place like a grocery store telling their misbehaving child, "Am I going to have to tell you again!" The answer would seem to be, "Yes".

A parent that acts swiftly to apply corrective discipline and does it consistently often finds more obedient children. Even in public, when there is a desire not to apply corrective consequences publicly, a child can be certain that a consequence will be applied when they are home.

We found that using a paint stirrer to swat the back of a hand to be a useful consequence. It has low mass and a larger surface area such that no actual damage can be done, but it still stings enough to communicate a consequence. One can experiment by hitting one's own hand to gauge the effect.

When a child is offered a choice of consequence such as three swats with the paint stirrer or having to sit five minutes on a chair, they invariably would choose the swats because they would be over sooner.

New mothers in particular can be hesitant to apply corrective discipline. They often try appeal to reason and fail to understand that they are unable to fully communicate at that level yet with their small children. The consequence method of communicating is what is understood at the earlier ages. In fact, by not communicating clearly and consistently with discipline, they may be creating greater problems in the future.

Communicating with a child requires clarity, simplicity, and immediacy. Ambiguous, hesitant, or delayed instructions or consequences can cause confusion or even contribute to bad behavior. In a way new mothers need to discipline themselves so that their children can benefit from discipline. There are sayings like “Justice delayed is justice denied”. That capture some wisdom from the past. Here are some more;

Pro 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Pro 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

The objective of discipline is not to apply pain to make the child somehow “pay” for his infraction. It is to help him learn to have internal discipline. His anticipation of painful consequence can be a huge motivator to reconsider some of his desires such that he develops the self-discipline that can benefit the rest of his life. Consider the child that has been told, “Look both ways before crossing the street”. A child who considers consequences may be more inclined to do so as opposed to the child who has not learned fear of consequences.

## Parental Observations

Even with one parent working outside the home, a husband and wife can discuss each of their children's characteristics and plan what steps might be taken to help each child develop their full potential. For example, a child with a particular interest (i.e. history, music, welding, etc.) can have books, videos, or equipment furnished that they can use to pursue their interests. Some interests change so parents need to keep current with present interests. A husband working outside the home may have to strongly rely on his wife's observations.

In addition to identifying strengths and interests, parents need to identify weaknesses and disinterests. A child may hate math. However, being able to navigate financial waters as an adult is an essential skill. Lending a child \$1 at 10% interest per minute can teach something about the importance of gaining a degree of math skill (after one hour he will owe over \$300).

Some parents have a rigid expectation for how their children should behave and can almost be ruthless in applying various forms of pressure (bullying, disapproval, even abuse) to try to get their children to conform to their expectations. Still other parents are so "hands off" that they allow their children to remain almost infantile their entire lives. Parents should understand that it is their responsibility to help their children learn the skills they will need to build their own families.

The first step for parents is to continue learning themselves. This means not only what they can do to instruct their children, but also the nature of the larger world they are preparing their children to navigate. If parents are unaware of the dangers in the world, they not only may fail to teach their children how to avoid them, they may even inadvertently guide their children into dangerous paths. The first step for Christian parents is to learn themselves how to mature in faith, grow in wisdom, and understanding, and walk by the Spirit. The second step is to teach this to their children.



## The Experimental Method

A child who is unusually shy can be allowed to seek their own social “level”, be punished for being unresponsive, or pushed into facing that which is uncomfortable. As an alternative, one can take a particular situation, such as with a shy child, and experiment to see at what distance from someone the shyness becomes acute. Further experimentation can be done to see if the child can take a step or two closer for a minute or two. In this way the child can discover the control they can exercise to push their boundaries.

Experimentation is a useful approach to many areas of life. It allows one to explore without making a total commitment. For example a newly married couple may find hurt feelings if a dinner prepared does not go well. However, if the same dinner had been declared an “experiment” the couple might feel more at ease describing what could be changed in the future.

A sad fact of life is that new parents are not skilled at raising children. By the time they get better, they are often at the age when they stop having children. That many new parents do not live with or close to their own parents means that even if their parents had information that would be helpful, it is not easily accessible.

Since no one is able to step into an environment where a traditional family is the norm, one has to become adept at constructing experiments as a method to determine what is workable or improvable. There can be an advantage to an environment where a cultural momentum carries one along. However, the modern culture is so hostile to the traditional family that at every step one has to make intentional decisions. In a way, almost every decision becomes an experiment.

When asked the secret of his success getting new products to work, one engineer answered, “prayer”. The Christian should make use of all his resources, he may not be as alone as he thinks.

## Fast, Cheap, and Easy

It can be difficult for Christian parents to fully appreciate the forces Satan has set in motion against them. The collectives he has constituted and the media he has programmed have been particularly effective. Many Christian parents sincerely believe that bringing their children to a denominational church for a couple of hours a week is all that is needed to insure that they have Christian faith. The appeal can be strong. It is easy, others seem to agree, specially trained pastors concur, and one is assured that experts have determined all that is needed. One should be suspicious of anything presented where one is told they have to accept something rather than conclude something as a result of their own inquiry.

Being relieved of the burden of thought can seem to be an advantage. One might see in the curse God placed on creation after the first sin an environment that is difficult. Difficulty was not for us to “pay” for sin or because God is a meany. Difficulty is a benefit for us because it forces us to understand that in our own nature there is that which would destroy us if allowed free reign. Just as the Roman Emperors were harmed by having their indulgences satisfied, all of humanity has suffered as a result of the comforts the Industrial Revolution and subsequent exploitation of petroleum and electric power have provided. Life has become easier, as a result, the first warnings God gave about us are coming to fruition (Gen 11:6). The world is more prosperous, there are many conveniences, and there is little to restrain our imagination.

Parents want to avoid constructing a copy of the world in their own homes. Children need to have work to do and be curbed from the indulgences of the larger world. Being able to see the world and it’s systems as Satan has designed them allows parents to both guide their children away from them as well as resist copying them in their own home.

## The Sleaze Factor

There is within humans that ability to associate sensations with thoughts. This can be observed when someone hears music from their childhood that evokes warm memories. Sadly, people can also come to associate feelings (even arousal) with thoughts such that recalling the imagery or thoughts allows the experience of the sensations. One can become addicted to their own thoughts without ever having tasted any drugs.

This “programmable” aspect of human nature was described by Paul in a positive way in that he took pleasure in what he had suffered for Christ (2Cor 12:10). To avoid the negative application of this characteristic requires both the ability to see it in truth and the skill to discipline oneself. These skills need to be developed before adolescence.

Satan has designed the media, particularly the entertainment media, to promote the visual and auditory stimulation of viewers. For this reason many parents select to avoid bringing any of this material into their homes. It is difficult to consider to allow all of it un-filtered into one’s home as its influence can be so effective, especially with children. It can be possible to selectively allow material that has been edited such that most of the filth is either removed, blocked, or reduced. This can be a useful approach to help children learn to identify some of the worst elements of contamination themselves.

Many Christians consider worldly sleaze as relatively harmless. However for some it can be a lifetime difficulty. Children can be taught why sleaze is harmful such as, it can influence and harm relationships, it can be addictive, it can cause one to focus on self-stimulation (the flesh, also called selfishness), it is a distortion of truth, and can blind one to better paths in life.

## The Trans Tragedy

Perhaps emblematic of the problem of the destructive paths one's own thoughts can take one is the transgender phenomena. One can entertain self-stimulating thoughts of sexual identity that grow to be compellingly persuasive. Those that pursue this path usually find a particularly painful and abrupt end to their delusions when reality forces itself such that half will attempt suicide.

It is our imaginative ability that allows the divorce from reality or the construction of an alternative reality that becomes a sort of mental "playground" in which almost any delusion or what the bible calls "vain imaginings" (Rom 1:21) can be entertained. This can become powerfully seductive and addictive.

People do not need to have a sexual arousal to be drawn down this path. Even those simply ambitious might be seen as chasing after the delusion of pride. One might also chase after gain if greedy. The idea that one should "follow their dreams" feeds into this sort of delusional thinking. Satan has made great use of playing to our weaknesses in these areas. He wants parents to be "affirming" so that children in particular can be encouraged to go further into the abyss of delusion.

## The Truth Shall Set You Free

As parents, perhaps the greatest gift one can give their children is truth. John writes that he has no greater joy than to hear his children are walking in truth (3John 1:4). Truth prevents the mental deterioration cause by delusions. Truth is the solid foundation by which discernment can avoid deception. Truth is the ultimate absolute and unchangeable reality. The bible calls four things truth, God the Son, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and the word of God.

Jesus said that knowing the truth would make one free (John 8:32). Jesus told Pilate that those who were of the truth would hear his voice (Jon 18:37). This implies an internal configuration that results in being “of the truth”. Parents face the difficult task of insuring that they themselves are of the truth and insuring that that configuration is achieved by their children.

Satan is called the “father of lies”. Children often discover how useful lying is to get what they want or avoid punishment. Often it is only through painful experience that a child learns that lying is a tool that harms those who wield it. Sadly, life’s soft comforts often come as one grows distant from truth. This can make one reluctant to acknowledge truth much less seek it.

Those who have known difficulty such as combat veterans, cops, emergency room nurses, abuse victims, ex-cons, or those who have had health problems can find themselves more open to truth because reality has made a painful intrusion into their lives. Jesus warned his disciples about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians. What was meant was the vulnerability to self-deception that such posturing can produce. A primary danger is that such self-deception is not easily correctable.

Being “of the truth” is not so much a choice, but rather the result of thousands of choices. The person who sets such a high value on truth that he will not tolerate that which is not true will make daily decisions that contribute to this internal structure. Sadly, some consider truth as what they hear that makes them feel good. The person who is of the truth will consider a flatterer or someone making some assertion that is not true similar to someone trying to hand him a poison snake.

Parents have to set an example for a high view of truth and demonstrate that even when costly, truth has to be maintained. The reverence for truth is more than simply not lying or deceiving oneself. Truth is involved in assessing everything that is seen and heard. This is also how discernment is exercised (Heb 5:14).

Truth can seem fragile since it is so easily lost. However, truth is robust and solid. What is fragile is our hold on it. We are told that at a future time some will succumb to a delusion because they received not a love of the truth (2Thess 2:10). The Greek word “love” (agape) is defined as selflessness (1Cor 13:4-7). The implication is that we have to value truth above ourselves. Perhaps more than anything else except faith this is the key to the Christian life. Seeing past the deceptions of the world and even our own flesh requires an unswerving desire for truth.

One should appreciate the damage that arises from tolerating even little lies or little “white” lies. It can be tempting to brush aside that which seems inconsequential. While one does not need to comment or point out every deviation from truth, he should be at least recognized them as such so that one maintains a sharper level of discernment.

### Binary Thinking

One can see a sort of black and white thinking with children and some adults of limited mental ability. One can also see with the nation of Israel that the law they were given was also specific as to what was and was not allowable. One might see in this a developmental step for both individuals as well as nations. That this is indicative of immaturity might be seen with the Corinthians (1Cor 3:1-3). Binary thinking lends itself to both conflicts and legalism.

It has been said that the two easiest sermons to give are how good we are or how bad others are. One of the dangers of binary thinking is that it greatly distorts truth. If we see ourselves as “good” and others as “bad”, it can contribute to conflict. It might even be seen with religious or political cult followers. Children need to be guided out of this developmentally limited stage of thinking to be able to more accurately see the world around them.

Being able to see past thinking that anything different is a threat requires both wisdom and understanding. Christians have an advantage here because they can be free from a “darkened mind (Eph 4:17-18). There is wisdom offered to all who ask (James 1:5-6). It is this deeper and broader perspective that allows one to see others less with hatred and more with pity. Parents who make progress themselves in the acquisition of understanding and wisdom are much more able to guide their children as well.

Here a church can actually hinder the development of deeper thinking as it may be structured to present a package of doctrine that is complete. This often implies that anything else is wrong. Smug certainty of being in the “right” can actually inhibit questioning, learning, and growth. Doctrine that helps you get to truth is useful. Doctrine as a “stepping stone” that helps each Christian learn how to be more like Jesus has value (which should be the purpose of a church Eph 4:11-15).

Most Christians today do not “explode” when hearing something they disagree with, they simply disconnect. One pastor described a phone call he got from someone asking him about what he thought the fourth kingdom was in Daniel. He answered, “Rome”. The caller hung up. The pastor lamented, “Don’t hang up, tell me what you think”. It is rare to find someone relaxed enough to discuss what they are learning and why. Parents who guide their children to have a joy in learning and inquisitive minds that question and explore can find that their children are less integrated into the world system, but rise above it.

## Humility

It might have been surprising to Elijah that he could be replaced by any one of 7,000 people (1Kings 19:18). It also might be somewhat humbling to hear that people can be “worth” many sparrows (Matt 10:31). We can see ourselves as having intrinsic value, value to others, and value to God. These various valuations can be inflated and the source of many pleasurable sensations.

While people can have an undervalued view of themselves, it is much more common for people to over value themselves (Rom 12:3).

Even Job after much suffering laments the loss of privileged status that might be seen as bringing to the surface some pride in chapter 29. In chapter 38 God asks Job where he was when God laid the foundations of the earth. This is an interesting question because it frames our relationship with God (the maker versus the thing made). As we grow in wisdom and understanding as well as our perception of truth, humility should be the natural by-product.

The world advocates boosting the self-esteem of children. This is often seen as good advice because it makes everyone feel good. However, the pursuit of pleasant sensations is not always beneficial as many drug addicts and alcoholics can attest. A child may benefit more from an honest assessment of how well they are improving as opposed to praise for any accomplishment.

Many see pride as thinking too highly of oneself. Some might think that one should counter pride by thinking too "lowly" of themselves. This might be seen as a false humility. It might be more accurate to consider that humility is more an absence of self. The Christian life is not so much the suppression of self, but rather the transcendence of self (2Cor 5:15). As self diminishes, humility grows.

Parents often struggle with this themselves. However, helping children overcome their own natural selfishness can give them quite an advantage in life. Many parents think that worldly success and achievement is the path to "success" for their children. Sadly, this often inflates pride and ambition. Selflessness is key to love which in turn is key to relationships of all kinds (us with each other and with God).

For those who would be parents but are unable, service to others can also help in maintaining humility.



Sometimes even one's approach to Christianity paints them into a corner of pride. The declaration of absolute doctrine can leave little room to accommodate correction. Even learning can be stifled. If our approach is about being "right", we can fall into the trap of pride. If our approach is Christ-likeness, we can all feel humbled by how far we need to go.

## Peer Pressure

Often only considered a problem for teenagers in high school, the influence of social pressure can affect any age. Often exercised through disparaging comments, social pressure is mostly applied to people to condemn their differences. The Dolly Parton song "Coat of Many Colors" captures a little of the pressure people can apply to what is different. Many people do not appreciate the similarity between the use of physical force and social force. Some times a bully can be deterred by responding with equal force such that one is no longer seen as an "easy target". With social pressure, one might respond with a demand to give an account. Most bullies do not like having the tables turned.

Social pressure is often wielded in a public area that militarily could be considered a force multiplier. However, holding one to account publicly can also make use of the same force multiplier. For example, in responding to a comment that one's clothes look stupid, one might respond, "Thank you for your unsolicited fashion advice. However, if my wardrobe choices have resulted in you wanting to avoid me, then I think I am the one that comes out ahead."

Not everyone is skilled in verbal combat in a social arena. For those less skilled, simply saying "thank you", looking hurt, and leaving may be sufficient. Many people want to control, direct, and manipulate others. Learning how to navigate past those who would apply pressure is a useful life skill. While there might be an occasional bully that could be engaged to some profitable end, most are best identified and avoided. Here the use of the Proverbs adage about fools is useful.

One is told to both answer a fool and don't answer a fool according to his folly. These two apparently contradictory verses (Prov 26:4-5) simply say that if you are going to get sucked into folly, don't answer. However, if you can be helpful, then engage him.

College is a place where social manipulation is brought to a fine art. In addition to force of personality, one often finds those who claim superior intellect as the basis for ridiculing others. Many have had their faith shaken with the brutal assault of those self-appointed purveyors of secularism (the worship of man in general and self in particular). No matter how boldly, authoritatively, or forcefully an assertion is made, it is only as good as the truth behind it.

## Dating

As one's children reach the age where they consider with whom they may start their own families, those elements that are used for selection criteria become important. For some, proximity is the determinant factor. For others how attractive one is is key. Still others may consider how popular one is. The importance of relatively superficial measurement criteria often fades as one advances to the late 20s. However, many marry in their early 20s using criteria that seemed important to them at the time.

The value of parental observation to younger people can be of critical importance. Sadly, it is often at this time when parental observations may be least welcome. For this reason it can be useful to have children learn early to appreciate and recognize more useful criteria such as kindness, forbearance, humor, love of the Lord, selflessness, honesty, and diligence. Children who have been raised with discernment and able to see truth should be able to recognize and avoid those who are superficial, greedy, vain, lazy, given to pleasure seeking, and other character defects that can cause significant pain in a marriage.

Once romantic affections have blossomed, there is a lamentable tendency to dismiss observed deficiencies as minor or temporary.

With historical traditional families, marriages were often between people who had known each other since childhood and there would be few surprises. In today's society, two people usually have a process of getting to know each other starting from close to ground zero. Sometimes people misrepresent themselves and their beliefs, often unintentionally, such that decisions can be made with faulty information.

Dating is the term used in the world that often describes a process of people simply searching for fornication partners. This can cause confusion for those seeking traditional family marriage partners. Courtship is an antiquated term that has been resurrected occasionally to try to capture a more conservative and traditional approach to marriage, but it still doesn't quite fit. This may be because the term was more suited to describe the period after an engagement and before a wedding. Until a better term comes along, the word "dating" may have to be used but more narrowly defined.

In our consumer society there is a tendency to view even other people as commodities to acquire. Often we find it easy to think in terms of the qualities we would like to see in the product we select. When this perspective carries over to the mate selection process, it is easy to forget that we are a "product" as well and that cultivating those qualities in ourselves that we would like to see in others should not be overlooked. For Christians, the opportunity exists to have improved character as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit as long as we do not "quench" it (1Thes 5:19).

## Communities

There are some flavors of Christianity that attempt to maintain a traditional community such as the Amish, Hutterites, some Mennonite, and Apostolic Lutheran.

Some lessons can be learned from these various groups. When the clothing of the plain community is seen as distinctive, it is no longer “plain”. Rigid group regulations and requirements can elevate the flesh through legalism. An “us versus them” mindset can elevate pride. A static view of doctrine can inhibit any maturing in faith. In a way, one can observe many of the negative aspects that could be found in historical traditional community life.

There can also be positive things to consider. For example the way income is derived for some Apostolic and Amish families is through business enterprises such as plumbing or electrical contracting. Service and craft businesses can still be run as family businesses for now. However, without a community, parents may need to apprentice their children to first learn a trade and then support them until they can start a self-sustaining business. Attempting a traditional family without an existing community might only see second and third generations able to network a small community of businesses.

The idea of building a community to help subsequent generations resist being drawn more into the world can be attractive. Not everyone has the same apprehensions of the dangers of the world as a family that pioneers this path. However, if their children can see their siblings as sources of encouragement, they may be able to slowly forge a community to help future generations.

## Time

Most people raising a family face various demands on time that can cause decisions to be made that may cause children to be short changed. Time can be prioritized such that a broken furnace needs immediate attention whereas sitting one on one with a particular child can seem a low priority. Giving priority to tasks of time can make time spent with children seem optional or even wasteful.

However, the human need for face time can be seen when adults in church almost seem desperate to have a weekly visit with other adults themselves.

For children time spent with a parent that is not task assignment, disciplinary, or evaluative can be a time for conversation in which aspirations, observations, and experiences can be shared. The casual conversation is the means by which many relationships are built and deepened. If a child does not have the opportunity to cultivate a deeper relationship with his parents (both mother and father), it can seem like he is raised in an orphanage.

Fathers can have even more difficulty because of the limited time they have in the home. Sometimes work can be so draining that it can be a sacrifice to engage children when one would rather rest. This may be what Jesus felt (Mark 6:31-34). In addition, fathers may not be naturally talkative. As a result, many fathers undertake task oriented projects that they and their child can work on together.

## Marital Time

In addition to time spent with children a husband and wife need to spend time together. The show of time and affection demonstrated in front of children can communicate volumes as to what is important as well as demonstrating how they themselves should act when they have their own homes.

Here the husband usually sets the tone for time spent together. There will always be tasks and chores that need to be done and there may never seem to be enough money, however, taking time for a special breakfast, lunch, or dinner can be essential for communicating one's appreciation for and desire to spend time with one's wife.

It is the busyness of life that can lead to a feeling of being "taken for granted".

It is essential for both husbands and wives to communicate both verbally and through action that the other is appreciated. Considering what a precious commodity time is, just taking some to go for a walk together can be special.

## Husband and Wife Roles

That the bible tells husbands to love their wives and women to respect their husbands speaks to the difference between men and women as well as the roles they are to fulfill. In order for Satan to build the coercive collectives he needs with people as compliant components, he has to destroy the family as an alternative to his society. He has done a good job getting many women to see their role as a drone in a corporate hive as something they should be willing to sacrifice everything to achieve. Ironically, all the while having them declare that to be an exploited wage slave is more prestigious than an honored wife and mother.

The Industrial Revolution took men out of the home. Public school took children out of the home. Lastly, Feminism took women out of the home. The fragmentation of the home has disconnected people and left them even more vulnerable to the Satanic influences in society that tend to lock people into selfishness.

A Catholic priest once observed that it was important for men to be in charge of something by the time they are 30. He had observed many men in his religious order outside of families and had concluded that this was necessary. It speaks volumes that the role of men is designed to be different than women. Almost every TV program (and before that radio program) portrays husbands as ineffectual dolts who need to be corrected by their wives and children. This comic portrayal is so pervasive one can see how important it is to Satan to denigrate husbands and fathers because he has allocated so many of his resources to do so.

There are many examples of bad marriages such as result from selfishness, immaturity, external interests, consumptive indulgences, and frustrated expectations. However, if a husband and wife can grow in Christ-likeness, they can have a happy home and see their children build happy homes of their own. A traditional family has to be aware of and shun those Satanic forces of the world that would make havoc of their lives. Both the Red Pill movement and Feminism advocate selfishness as a “solution”, only to find that these inflict even more damage on one’s life.

Children benefit greatly from observing obvious affection between their parents. This practical daily experience establishes a foundation of what a marriage can and should be. The cartoon image of a man telling his wife and children what to do falls apart in the face of real life. A man is wise to solicit opinions and suggestions. He is the ultimate head of the family, however, any leader that is effective is not autocratic. In the military a leader is respected if he demonstrates his concern for those he leads. In a traditional home, this concern is demonstrated through conversation, inquiry, and affection. An excessive emphasis on events, entertainments, and treats can create a consumer and consumptive perspective that feeds the flesh. An emphasis on learning, questioning, and inquiry contributes to a sort of “reach” beyond self. One needs to maintain a balance and avoid both the austere and indulgent.

Some men are taciturn and uncomfortable with verbal expression. This inclination needs to be overcome to some extent so that the other family members who depend on his leadership know that he has an interest in them and can discern his affection for them. The absence of communication is a gulf that may be filled with apprehension, assumption, uncertainty, and fear.

Women need to be able to communicate as well. Parents that communicate affection even with a hand on the shoulder, pat on the head, or a hug can do much to insure that a child knows he is loved and secure.

Traditional roles are not so much the stereotype image of a bossy husband issuing Hitler like orders, but the more real dynamic of each parent working in their sphere to insure the family comes first more than their own desires. In modern times this also includes a savvy appreciation of the many and diverse ways Satan has set in motion that which would destroy their home and seduce their children.

### Location Location Location

This title is often cited to make sure that someone starting a business selects the best place to locate it. The implication is that a place with a high population density will result in higher sales volume. The family attempting to adopt more traditional elements may do so in an apartment in a big city, a tract home in a suburb, or in a rural area on a small acreage. Each location has its own challenges. On an acreage a child might be assigned the daily task of feeding chickens and collecting eggs. In an urban environment a child might be assigned the daily task of walking the family dog.

It can be a challenge to find worthwhile daily chores for children while living in an apartment. Such a confined area often lends itself to things like cell phone entertainment. However, one can assign tasks such as making craft projects to sell on ebay that can both generate income as well as serve to instill some work discipline.

Higher population density locations will often increase the contact children have with those whose values are the opposite of what a parent wishes to instill in their child. Homeschool can reduce this, but parents will have the difficulty of trying to work against those influences that can be applied to their children through contact with peers.



## How to Live the Christian Life

Some consider that the successful Christian life is achieved by following all of the requirements of a particular denomination. Others may feel that adhering to a rigid set of rules is the key. Still others may see going with whatever feels good to be the right path. One might see from the bible that Christ-likeness is the best measure of a “successful” Christian life. This is essentially the abandonment of selfishness (2Cor 5:15).

This is not so much a one time choice but a gradual letting go of those pursuits that serve self and increasingly taking joy in what works to the advantage of others. At the same time parents are making their own progress towards the life of Christ, they need to be able to instruct their children to take joy in serving others as well.

Bible doctrine is important. For example, the Galatians had been talked into following the laws given to Israel such that Christ was of none effect and they had fallen from grace (Gal 5:4). Accepting a doctrine that takes one out of the grace of God is not the same as losing salvation, but it does limit ones path to spiritual maturity.

One might consider following a Christian path that takes advantage of the grace God would provide (2Cor 9:8). John writes the Jews that God is faithful to forgive sins of those who confess. The word translated “confess” is homologos (to say the same words) (1John 1:9). This process of alignment might also be seen with Christians in that as we see truth, turn from the flesh, and separate from the world, we can also more tune into and find the grace of God working in us.

In the busyness of daily life Christianity can seem like an optional extra. To live as if Christianity is the essential part of life one has to be able to see it as critical to navigating around the evils of the world and the flesh. One has to “tune in” to grace and out of the world and the flesh.

## The Importance of Family

In a way, our relation with God is like our relation to our parents. Our parents gave us physical life and God gave us eternal life through faith in Christ. However, in both cases we can also come to see familial obligations as inconvenient and even onerous. Modern life has been designed to make us under value and even resent family relations.

A line from Shakespeare says “How sharper than a servant’s tooth, a thankless child”. This captures a little of the pain more frequent as our culture follows the trajectory of living for self. Parents attempting to raise a more traditional family need to help their children learn to see the world and its deceptions for what they are. Some try to live a “good” life by rigid adherence to what is right and wrong. This can lead to confrontations. Recently a 16 year old boy told his parents that he did not think Christianity was true because he saw eternal conscious torment as being unjust. A parent that puts his child in a position of accepting or rejecting something may find that the child will more often reject it.

An exploratory approach to answer questions might help a child see his parents not so much as rule enforcers, but ones to whom he can come with questions and doubts and find someone interested in helping him find answers. At a basic level of survival, the family is essential. Modern life tends to see the family as more peripheral. For Christians family is even more essential. Without parental guidance, most children would not be able to escape the deceptions Satan has woven around them.

Family should be where we learn the difference between selfless love and selfish “love”. Modern life has many superficial relationships, however, family is where one should learn about deeper relationships.

## The Scope of the Problem

Satan made Christianity into a process run by systems and institutions. He then made them ritualistic and disconnected from real life. As a result, many saw no value in Christianity such that they turned to social and political activism to be the means to have their new “god” care for them. Most today are unaware that they are in the process of being enslaved.

In addition to being isolated from the world, Christians today face the problem of making decisions with inadequate information. It can be difficult to find even one person who thinks like you do or has the experience to offer useful suggestions. Many may offer a sort of “soft” Christianity that has comfortable fellowship and a feeling of complacency. However, Christianity was never intended to be a place to park.

It can be difficult to inject vital Christianity each day into the lives of your children without it seeming to become ritualistic. However, the Israelites were encouraged to teach their children as part of daily life (Deut 6:7). To do this successfully each parent also needs to be seeing the world around them in Christian terms so that their children can gain this same perspective.

There is a danger in isolation of becoming prideful and critical. This can be mitigated by cultivating humility and seeing others not so much wrong as unaware. Praying for others is a good practice in general, but essential to keep one concerned for others more than condemning others.

While what we face has never been before in the history of the world, God is able to carry us through. Of particular help is when we can meet those like-minded and give and receive encouragement.

## Family Life

There is a lot more to family life than getting a good job, putting your kids in school, and cruising into a comfortable retirement. Many (perhaps most) have this as a life ambition. However, those Christians who desire a more traditional family life have to consider that there is much much more to life and that they need to discover much of it for themselves as well as trying to teach it to their children.

It can be helpful to consider specific reasons for pursuing a traditional family.

1. Resist the corruption of the world. (Jam 1:27)
2. Teach children real values (Eph 6:4)
3. Pursue Christian learning and maturity (Eph 1:16, Eph 4:13-15)
4. Help children develop godly character. (3John1:4)
5. Make the Christian faith a vital part of daily life. (Phil 4:8)

Trying to live a traditional Christian family life is difficult. The world has been structured to be in opposition. There can be little support or information. It can be demanding of financial, time, and energy resources. Our own fleshly inclinations resist the selflessness required. There would seem little reason to embark on such an arduous journey except to be faithful to and grow deeper in the knowledge of the Lord, insure one's children grow capable of resisting the corruption of the flesh and the world, and be able to offer support and encouragement to any others that might also desire to cling to Christ.