

Lesson Four

Teach Children to Know the Will of God

Worship

Read responsively Psalm 119:2-10.

Leader: Blessed are they who keep his statutes

Group: and seek him with all their heart.

L: They do nothing wrong;

G: they walk in his ways.

L: You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.

G: Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!

L: Then I would not be put to shame

G: when I consider all your commands.

L: I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

G: I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

L: How can a young man keep his way pure?

G: By living according to your word.

L: I seek you with all my heart;

G: do not let me stray from your commands.

Prayer: Dear Lord, bless our Bible study today. Help us as we seek to influence our children to walk in your ways. Before we can do that, we need your help to follow your ways in our own lives. Bless us with the hope we have in Christ. Help us live as people who are forgiven, and who can look forward to an eternal life in heaven. To that end, give us your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we ask this. Amen.

Introduction

1. What struggles do children (as well as adults) have in living a God-pleasing life?

The world frequently bombards us with what it considers to be positive values.

Materialism, self-promotion, the "have-it-my-way" and the "when-and-where-I-want-it" lifestyles are promoted today. Satan would have us look at values through his eyes. He tells us it is important to make sure we take care of ourselves first.

It is a daily struggle to take every thought and make it obedient to Christ.

2. Children and good works are a powerful combination! Read Deuteronomy 6:6,7. What insight does this passage give to those who are striving to influence children?

Through the faith created in them by Baptism, children are willing to serve God in good works, but they need to be shown what good works are and how these good works come as fruits of faith.

Those who influence need to instruct. That includes giving examples of godly living, personal modeling, discussion, and general conversations about God's will and observations we have gleaned about living for the Lord.

3. Read Philippians 3:17. How important to Paul was the example he gave for others to follow?

Very important! Examples by parents, grandparents, older siblings, called workers, extended family, and friends all have a great effect on young Christians. Watch for teachable moments.

Studying God's Word

Serving Christ

4. Are the good works of children simply "eye candy" for a proud parent or a self-righteous child? Explain why or why not.

Good works can become self-serving. Children may perform good works so they look good to others or so they can feel good about something they have done. Parents can contribute to this idea by holding up their children as paragons of virtue.

Children need to see themselves as people who serve their loving Savior in what they say, do, and think.

5. What is the heart of Christian servitude?

The heart of Christian service is love for Christ. This is a love that flows from Christ's love for us.

6. As we encourage children to do good works, whom should we be leading them to serve?

Above all, they need to learn to serve God. We want their lives to be lives of worship and praise. Also, they should be encouraged to serve mom and dad, grandma, and grandpa. But we want them to go beyond that small circle. They need to learn to serve their fellow believers at home and abroad and to help anyone as he or she has need.

7. What lessons can be drawn from Ephesians 6:5-8 for those who want to influence children and the generations to come?

Although Paul's words are directed to slaves, the same general principles apply to anyone who is called to serve someone else. We should do the will of God from the heart. We are to serve wholeheartedly! We are to think of our service as serving the Lord, not people.

8. What are some examples you have used or that you remember having an impact on your life in the Lord?

It is not hard to think about unselfish examples that we have seen or been a part of.

As a child I remember my dad's unselfish work in attending church meetings and serving his congregation as a layperson in whatever capacity he could. It was a large time commitment, but one that he did willingly. My mother took care of aged, failing parents. As a family we have looked after several neighbors who needed assistance in a variety of ways.

Encourage the class by reminding them that they can have the same influence on the next generation as the previous generation has had on them.

Using Bible lessons and memory work to influence our children

9. What two things do lessons from God's Word teach us? (Hint: Remember SOS.)

Bible accounts show God's displeasure with the sins of his people, but they also show the positive godliness that we can emulate.

10. Discuss Bible lessons that were particularly important to you as you were growing up.

Answers will vary. Use this to remind the class of the importance of teaching their children the basic lessons of God's Word.

11. What help can memory work give our children?

When we think of memory work, we think of memorizing Scripture texts, portions of the Small Catechism, and stanzas of Christian hymns. When we memorize these things as children, they are like seed that is sown and will grow later and provide direction and influence when needed. Memory work gives us immediate access to God's Word and supplies comfort in our everyday lives right at the moment we need it. It provides direction when we are faced with decisions.

12. What are some ways parents can help their children memorize God's Word?

One of the best ways is to keep abreast of what your child is doing in Sunday school or in Lutheran elementary school. Teachers regularly assign memory work. The more you can help your children fulfill their assignments, the better. If you conduct home devotions, see if the material you use has suggestions for memory work.

13. I'm not a parent. What can I do to influence children in God's Word?

Do you have relatives who have children? How might you support them in their faith? Are you a godparent? What might you do to help your godchild? Consider sending cards on the godchild's baptism date, giving a gift at confirmation, or mentioning that you are praying for him or her. Do you know a neighbor child who might be interested in vacation Bible school? You might consider teaching Sunday school or serving in one of the youth organizations in your church.

Summary

There are many ways to influence our children in their faith and life. Teach them God's Word. Model your own faith. Discuss the truth with your children at every opportunity. Share insights you have into God's blessings in Christ. Use teachable moments to instruct your children, either in what Jesus has done for them or in how Jesus wants them to live. Focus on teaching your children Bible lessons. Support your children's teachers at Sunday school or your Lutheran elementary school. Be aware of what they are teaching your children and work with them as the opportunity presents itself. Help your children with memory work assignments.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, open my eyes so that I might see the harvest field of children all around me whom I can influence for their eternal salvation. Help me as a parent not to get distracted by all the secular activities my child is engaged in so that time with God's Word suffers in our home. Help me as a grandparent to see my grandchildren as citizens of your kingdom and to strive to help them grow in faith. Give me as a single person ways in which I can help young people know you better. In all things, may your name be praised. Amen.