

## Lesson Five

# Help Children Improve; Teach Respect

## Worship

Read responsively Proverbs 4:3-8.

Leader: When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender,

**Group: and an only child of my mother,**

L: he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart;

**G: keep my commands and you will live.**

L: Get wisdom, get understanding;

**G: do not forget my words or swerve from them.**

L: Do not forsake wisdom,

**G: and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.**

L: Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.

**G: Though it cost all you have, get understanding.**

L: Esteem her, and she will exalt you;

**G: embrace her, and she will honor you."**

Prayer: Lord of our lives, help us today as we study your Word. We know how difficult it is to improve ourselves. We are sinners with a sinful nature. We can turn ourselves to serve you only when you have set our hearts free through the good news of your forgiveness and grace. Help us take the log of sin out of our own eyes so we can see clearly to take the specks of sin out of the eyes of your young Christians. Also, help us to learn respect for you so that we can learn how to teach others to respect their parents and other representatives you have placed on earth for our good. Amen.

## Introduction

1. Read Matthew 26:41 and Romans 7:18. What challenges to our faith are highlighted in these verses?

Matthew 26:41 points out the power of temptation. We want to do the right thing, but our "flesh" is weak. (Note: The word translated as "body" in NIV is better translated "flesh." *Flesh* emphasizes the weakness and sinfulness of our human nature.) Our children are tempted just as we are.

Romans 7:18 points out the struggle that goes on in each of us. We desire to do good, but we don't always do it.

In short, the challenge is to stand firm when our sinful nature wants to give in.

2. How does the struggle of Romans 7:18 go on display in children today?

Children who have been taught the law of God want to do what the law says, but their sinful nature keeps them from doing it.

## Studying God's Word

### Helping Christian children grow in their lives of faith

3. We are new creations in Christ and sinners as well—as are our children. How do you think young people sometimes feel when faced with this challenge?

As children go through this struggle, they can become discouraged and despair. They may feel that they cannot meet the standard of the law.

4. Read Isaiah 41:10 and 54:10. How do these passages comfort the struggling sinner? According to these passages, where does our strength lie?

God's covenant promises of forgiveness and grace are always with us. The Lord continues to have compassion on us.

The Lord's unfailing love for us is our source of spiritual strength. We are reminded that his promises are firm and unshaken. He strengthens, helps, and upholds us with his righteous right hand.

Whether young or old, whatever spiritual strength we have is not of our making. Through Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith.

5. Read Matthew 26:41 again. What instruction does Jesus give his disciples that we can give to young people?

We need to remind children to pray, model prayer for them, and pray for them and with them.

6. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:9. What is our goal in working to help our children grow in their lives of faith?

As we work with Christian children, our main goal is to help them on their journey to eternal life with God. We continually hold out to them the glorious hope of salvation in Jesus Christ.

7. Read Romans 8:18. As God's people go through trials and temptations, what should they always keep in mind?

As adults we always need to remind our children of the glory we will someday experience in heaven when God gives us perfect, glorified bodies and enables us to live with him into eternity.

### Helping Christian children respect their elders

This and the final lesson will deal with several aspects of sanctification. These topics affect every area of our children's lives in Christ.

8. How do you define *respect*?

To respect someone or something is to show esteem, honor, consideration, and concern for the other person. It is to think highly of that person, to regard that person greater than one's self, and to show reverence to that person.

9. Children are to show respect first and foremost to their parents. In the Fourth Commandment, Luther said that a child should honor his father and mother. Why might Luther have used the word *honor*?

The word *honor* conveys the following thoughts:

Fathers, mothers, and others are God's representatives. Consequently, they have their authority from God.

God has placed fathers and mothers in a position of authority over children.

Children are to look up to these representatives whom their Lord has placed over them for their good.

10. Children owe respect to more than just parents. Read the following passages and state how they expand on the idea of showing respect to parents. (Note: Some of these passages refer to the respect that adults owe to those who are over them. The concept of being subordinate to others does not apply just to children.)

- 1 Timothy 5:17

We are to honor those who bring the Word of God to us.

- Romans 13:5-7

Governmental authorities are included among those whom children (and adults) are to respect.

- Ephesians 6:5

If children have accepted a job of some sort, they should honor their employer.

- Leviticus 19:32

Children should show respect for elderly people. This is a fine quality through which children revere the Lord himself.

11. Agree or disagree. Lack of respect is solely due to *lack of being taught* that showing respect is the proper thing to do.

Some people do equate the two. Some feel that if a child does not show respect, education is the answer. Likewise, there are those who feel that people who are known for their respectfulness have been taught this. There is truth to this. After all, this is what the Lord is doing through his inspired writers in the passages we just read.

But we should also be aware that knowing what to do does not give us the power to do it. We may be properly educated but lack the spiritual desire in Christ to carry out what we know we should do.

Along with education must be added the continued encouragement to do the Lord's will based on what the child has become in Christ, namely, a child of God and an heir of eternal life.

12. Christians working to influence children do so in the context of the children's faith. That is, they work to teach children sanctified living as children of God; they don't just teach morality. Discuss the following practical methods and approaches to influencing children to be respectful.

- Do not intimidate a child in order to gain respect. Severe, harsh, stern, and unloving dealings with a child will not create respect. Rather, these actions will create fear and hatred in a child's heart.

Satan will set up roadblocks of all types to keep children from doing what they should do.

Children are no different from adults and have long memories. Many times something that was said or done to them had a negative influence, and they have not forgotten this. It simmers and festers within their hearts. It results in a reluctance to honor and respect because in their minds the people who negatively influenced them are not worthy of honor and respect.

Some in the class may have experienced such harshness and will verify the truth of this statement. Let that person share his or her experience. It will help the group avoid such methods in bringing up their children.

- Children must be told *why* they should be respectful. Go back to your own childhood. What reasons were you given as to why you should show respect to others? Evaluate those reasons.

Rather than giving human reasons on why a child should show respect to others, a Christian will want to focus on God's reasons. On a basic level, this is what God expects of children. Children are to conduct themselves respectfully toward all people simply because this is what God wants. And as children of God, this is what they want to do.

- The actions of adults modeling respectfulness as they deal with people in their own lives is a powerful tool for influencing their children.

This is a crucial aspect of influencing our children. When children see adults showing respect to people who are over them in society, the children will be encouraged to do the same.

13. What Bible accounts might you use to teach children to be respectful?

Lessons include the boy Jesus in the temple and his respect for Mary and Joseph (Luke 2), the disrespect certain youths showed for God's prophet Elisha (2 Kings 2:23,24), the account of Samuel's obedient attitude toward the high priest Eli (1 Samuel 3), and Timothy's obvious respect for his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). These lessons are used by the Holy Spirit and not forgotten.

14. Fill in the blanks. (The purpose of this exercise is to help Christians learn to expect the proper behavior from those they are called on to influence. They should not just laugh off bad behavior but in a kind yet firm way let children know what God expects of them.)

- When children are not respectful, \_\_\_\_\_.  
... they must be reprimanded for their lack of respect. They must be shown what to do.
- When children meet an adult whom they know, \_\_\_\_\_.  
... the children should greet the adult politely.
- When children are spoken to, \_\_\_\_\_.  
... they should pay attention.
- When children are asked a question, \_\_\_\_\_.  
... they should respond and give an answer as best they can.

- When children are called, \_\_\_\_\_.  
... they should come.
- When children want information, \_\_\_\_\_.  
... they should not be afraid to ask, but ask with patience and humility.
- When children are asked to do a favor, \_\_\_\_\_.  
... they should be ready and willing to do so, motivated by the Savior's love for them.

## **Summary**

Our sinful nature makes growth in faith difficult. Yet we should never despair, because the Lord is with us and he promises to forgive us and help us. We should help children show respect toward those in positions of authority.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, comfort us with the knowledge that you will always be with us as we seek to influence our children. Give us perseverance when we fail, and encourage us to continue our labor of love for the sake of the precious children whom you have placed into our care. Help us to be respectful of others as we teach our children to show proper respect to those whom the Lord has placed over them.  
Amen.