

The Christian Home, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 7: Raising Children in the Lord: Teaching the Faith at Home

Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Ephesians 6:4

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6:4 together set out the parents' God-ordained responsibility, and especially the father's, for the spiritual formation of their children, and the teacher should present this as one of the weightiest callings in all of Scripture. The doctrinal core is twofold. First, the transmission of the faith to the next generation is, under God, entrusted chiefly to the home, not primarily to the church's programs or to schools. God's own design places the front line of discipleship at the family table. Second, this teaching flows from the parent's own wholehearted love for God; the Shema commands that God's words be 'on your heart' before they are taught to the children. A parent cannot impart a faith they do not themselves possess and practice. Ephesians 6:4 then lays the charge especially on fathers, both to engage actively ('bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord') and to do so gently ('do not provoke your children to anger').

Two errors should be named and avoided. The first is the outsourcing of faith, the widespread assumption that an hour or two at the church building each week, or a Christian school, can do what God assigned to parents. The teacher should challenge this gently but clearly: the church's teaching ministry is a vital support to the home, never a substitute for it. The second error is the father's absence, whether harsh and provoking or passive and disengaged. Many men have absorbed the idea that spiritual training is mother's work; Paul says otherwise. Both errors leave the child's soul under-shepherded. Throughout, keep the tone encouraging rather than guilt-inducing; the aim is to call parents up into a glorious task, not to bury them under shame.

This lesson is aimed at deep formation in two directions at once. It presses parents to tend their own walk with God, since their faith is the wellspring of their children's, and it sends them back into the ordinary moments of home life, the car, the table, the bedside, as the sacred ground where the next generation comes to know the Lord. Crucially, it also clarifies the goal: not mere good behavior or religious information, but children who come to a genuine, personal faith and obedience to the gospel of their own. Question 9 takes up the vital distinction between the parents' part and the child's part, which both relieves anxious parents and sobers complacent ones. The disciple being formed here is a parent who loves God first, teaches the faith all day long, engages gently and fully, and entrusts the outcome to the God who alone gives the increase.

Question 1

Student Question:

The Shema declares, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:4–5). Before any instruction about children, God commands wholehearted love for Himself. Why must this come first, and how does a parent’s own love for God form the foundation of everything else in raising children?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Shema begins with the bedrock confession of biblical faith: ‘the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’ There is one God, and He alone is to be loved and served. From that confession flows the great commandment Jesus Himself named the first of all: to love this one God ‘with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might,’ that is, with the whole self, holding nothing back. Everything in the passage about children rests on this foundation.

It is essential to see that God commands wholehearted love for Himself before He says one word about teaching children. The order is deliberate and non-negotiable. The first task of a parent is not to raise children well but to love God well. A parent’s relationship with God is not a private matter separate from parenting; it is the very root from which faithful parenting grows. Get this order backward, making the children the highest priority and God an afterthought, and the whole enterprise is undermined.

Help students feel why this must come first. Faith is more caught than taught. Children absorb their deepest sense of what is real and what matters from the atmosphere of the home, and that atmosphere is set largely by whether the parents genuinely love God. A parent who loves God wholeheartedly creates a climate in which knowing God seems natural and desirable. A parent who merely performs religion teaches, without a word, that God is a duty to be managed.

The teacher should also note the comfort here. Parents often feel they lack the skill or knowledge to teach the faith. But the first requirement is not expertise; it is love. An ordinary parent who genuinely loves the Lord is already doing the most important thing. Skill can be added, but it cannot substitute for a heart that loves God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- ‘The Lord is one’ as the bedrock confession of biblical faith
- Wholehearted love for God (the great commandment) as the foundation
- God commanded first, before instruction about children, by deliberate order
- Faith more caught than taught; the home’s atmosphere set by the parents’ love for God
- The first requirement of a parent is love for God, not teaching expertise

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God command wholehearted love for Himself before teaching children?
- How does a parent’s love for God set the atmosphere of the whole home?

- What comfort is there in knowing love for God matters more than expertise?

Question 2

Student Question:

You cannot give what you do not have. Be honest about your own heart: is your love for God whole and warm, or has it cooled into routine and duty? Where do you most need God to revive your own first love, knowing that the people around you are learning what it looks like to love Him by watching you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application turns the Shema inward before it ever reaches the children. The uncomfortable but freeing principle is simple: you cannot give what you do not have. A parent whose own love for God has cooled into routine and duty will struggle to kindle in a child a fire they no longer feel themselves.

Invite honest reflection that distinguishes activity from affection. A person can attend faithfully, serve diligently, and know the Bible well, while their actual love for God has grown cold. The question is not about performance but about the heart: is there warmth, delight, hunger for God, or only obligation? Many sincere believers discover, when they pause to look, that their first love has quietly faded.

Point toward revival, not mere resolve. A cold heart is rekindled not by trying harder to feel something but by returning to the Lord, through honest prayer, time in the Word, repentance, and remembering His grace. Invite each student to name where their own love for God most needs reviving and one step toward that renewal, remembering that the people closest to them are learning what loving God looks like by watching.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- You cannot give what you do not have
- Distinguishing religious activity from genuine love for God
- First love that quietly cools into routine and duty
- Revival of the heart through returning to the Lord, not mere effort

Discussion Prompts

- Is your love for God warm and whole, or has it cooled into routine?
- What is the difference between religious activity and loving God?
- Where does your own first love most need reviving?

Question 3

Student Question:

God says, “these words that I command you today shall be on your heart,” and only then, “you shall teach them diligently to your children” (vv. 6–7). What does this order, your own heart first, then your children, teach about the relationship between a parent’s walk with God and a parent’s ability to pass on the faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 6 and 7 make the order explicit: ‘these words ... shall be on your heart’ (v. 6), and then, ‘you shall teach them diligently to your children’ (v. 7). The word translated ‘on your heart’ pictures truth that has soaked in, that lives in the inner person, not merely information stored in the head. Only what is on the parent’s heart can be taught diligently to the child.

Draw out the principle: a parent’s walk with God is the spring from which the child’s instruction flows. This is not to say that godly parents always produce godly children (Question 9 will address the child’s own responsibility), but that the ordinary, God-appointed means of passing on faith runs through a parent who genuinely possesses it. Hypocrisy is quickly detected and deeply corrosive; children who sense that a parent’s religion is for show often conclude the whole thing is hollow.

Conversely, authenticity is powerfully formative. When children see that their parents’ faith is real, that it shapes how they spend money, handle conflict, treat strangers, face suffering, and confess sin, the truth on the parent’s heart becomes credible and attractive. The teacher should stress that consistency between word and life is not optional polish but the very channel through which faith is transmitted.

This relieves a particular pressure while adding a particular weight. It relieves the pressure to be a flawless parent or a polished teacher; what is required is reality, not perfection. And it adds the weight of integrity: the most important curriculum in the home is the parent’s own life with God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- ‘On your heart’ as truth soaked in, not merely information in the head
- The parent’s walk with God as the spring of the child’s instruction
- Hypocrisy as corrosive; authenticity as formative
- Consistency of word and life as the channel of transmission
- Reality, not perfection, as what is required

Discussion Prompts

- Why can a parent only teach what is truly ‘on the heart’?
- How do children sense the difference between real and performed faith?
- What does it mean that your life with God is the home’s main curriculum?

Question 4

Student Question:

Children are far more shaped by what they catch than by what they are told. What are your children (or the young people who watch you) actually catching from your life about how much God matters, how you handle trouble, how you treat people, how you speak of the church? Where do you sense a gap between what you say and what you model?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application makes the 'caught more than taught' principle concrete. Children are relentless observers; they learn far more from what their parents model than from what their parents say. The question asks parents to consider what their children are actually catching, not what they hope they are teaching.

Help students examine the specific arenas the question names. What do children catch about how much God matters, from how the parent prays, worships, and speaks of Him? About handling trouble, from how the parent responds to stress, loss, and disappointment? About people, from how the parent treats a waiter, a difficult neighbor, a political opponent? About the church, from how the parent speaks of fellow Christians and the gathering of the saints? Children absorb a whole theology from these unscripted moments.

Then name the gap honestly. Almost every parent has areas where their walk preaches the opposite of their words, where they urge patience and model temper, or praise the church on Sunday and criticize it on the drive home. The aim is not despair but one honest identification and one step toward closing the gap, perhaps even letting children see the parent repent, which itself teaches the gospel.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Children shaped more by what they catch than by what they are told
- Modeling in handling trouble, treating people, and speaking of the church
- An unscripted theology absorbed from ordinary moments
- Naming the gap between word and life, and letting children see repentance

Discussion Prompts

- What are your children actually catching about how much God matters?
- What do they learn from how you handle trouble and treat people?
- Where is there a gap between what you say and what you model?

Question 5**Student Question:**

God commands that His words be taught “when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (v. 7). What does this picture of all-day, woven-in teaching reveal about how God intends faith to be passed on, and how is it different from merely formal or scheduled religious instruction?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 7 describes a beautifully ordinary pattern: teach God’s words ‘when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.’ The four phrases cover the whole day, from waking to sleeping, at home and on the road. The picture is not of a scheduled religious lesson but of a constant, natural conversation about God woven through the fabric of daily life.

This reveals how God intends faith to be passed on: not mainly through formal instruction (good as that is) but through countless ordinary moments. Faith is transmitted in the answer to a child’s bedtime question, in a comment about God’s handiwork on a walk, in grace before a meal, in how a parent talks through a hard day, in a snatch of Scripture recalled at the right moment. The home becomes a place where God is simply part of the conversation, all day long.

Contrast this with merely scheduled, compartmentalized religion. When faith is confined to a set time and place, children learn that God belongs in a box, relevant on Sundays and irrelevant to real life. When faith is woven through ordinary moments, children learn that God is relevant to everything, present in the car and the kitchen and the carpool. The medium teaches as much as the message.

The teacher should make this attainable. The all-day weaving of faith does not require theological expertise or elaborate programs; it requires a parent who is willing to talk naturally about the Lord in the ordinary flow of life. Even simple, consistent rhythms (a verse at breakfast, prayer at bedtime, honest God-talk in the car) accomplish more over years than occasional grand efforts.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The fourfold pattern (sit, walk, lie down, rise) covering the whole day
- Faith transmitted through ordinary moments, not mainly formal lessons
- Compartmentalized religion teaching that God belongs in a box
- Woven-in faith teaching that God is relevant to everything
- The attainability of simple, consistent rhythms over years

Discussion Prompts

- What does all-day teaching reveal about how faith is meant to pass on?
- How is this different from scheduled, compartmentalized religion?
- What simple rhythm could weave God into your ordinary day?

Question 6

Student Question:

Many parents unintentionally outsource their children's faith to the church building, a Christian school, or a youth group, while little is said about the Lord at home. Where have you been leaving the spiritual teaching to someone else? What is one specific way you could begin weaving the Lord into the ordinary moments of your home, the car, the table, bedtime, this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application names a widespread and well-intentioned mistake: outsourcing the children's faith. Loving parents enroll children in Bible classes, youth groups, and Christian schools, all good things, and then quietly assume the spiritual work is covered, while little or nothing is said about the Lord at home. But these supports were never meant to replace the home; they were meant to reinforce it.

Help parents examine honestly where they have handed off what God assigned to them. The question is not whether to use the church's ministries (parents should), but whether the home has gone silent about God between Sundays. A few hours a week of instruction cannot outweigh a hundred and sixty hours of a home where God is never mentioned.

Move toward one concrete practice. The question names the natural settings: the car, the table, bedtime. A parent might begin a simple habit of bedtime prayer and a Bible story, a verse and a question at breakfast, or honest conversations about God prompted by the day's events. Encourage one specific, sustainable step rather than an ambitious program likely to collapse. The goal is to break the silence and begin weaving the Lord back into the ordinary moments of home.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Outsourcing faith to church programs, schools, or youth groups
- Supports meant to reinforce the home, not replace it
- The disproportion between a few hours of instruction and a silent home
- One concrete, sustainable practice to weave God back into daily life

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you been leaving your children's faith to someone else?
- What does it teach a child when God is never mentioned at home?
- What is one ordinary moment you could fill with God this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul writes, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Why do you think Paul addresses fathers in particular, and what does it mean to ‘bring up’ children in the instruction of the Lord without ‘provoking them to anger’?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul’s charge in Ephesians 6:4 is addressed specifically to ‘fathers,’ and the specificity is intentional and important. In Paul’s world, and often in ours, the spiritual nurture of children was assumed to be the mother’s domain, while fathers concerned themselves with provision and discipline. Paul cuts across that assumption and lays the responsibility for bringing children up ‘in the discipline and instruction of the Lord’ squarely on fathers. This does not diminish the mother’s vital role (Timothy’s faith came through Eunice and Lois), but it refuses to let fathers off the hook. Fathers are to lead in the spiritual formation of their children.

The verse has two halves, a prohibition and a command, and both matter. The prohibition: ‘do not provoke your children to anger.’ Fathers can exasperate children through harshness, constant criticism, unfair or inconsistent discipline, impossible standards, broken promises, or favoritism. Such provocation does not produce godliness; it produces resentment and can drive a child away from the faith the father hopes to instill. The teacher should help fathers see that the manner of their leadership matters as much as the content.

The command: ‘bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.’ ‘Bring them up’ pictures nourishing and rearing toward maturity, a patient, active, ongoing work. ‘Discipline’ (training and correction, the subject of Lesson 8) and ‘instruction’ (teaching, admonition, the verbal passing on of truth) are both ‘of the Lord,’ that is, aimed at and shaped by Christ. The father is to be actively, intentionally engaged in forming his children toward the Lord, not passively present.

Hold the two halves together. The goal is engaged, gentle, Christ-centered leadership: a father fully involved in his children’s spiritual formation, yet tender rather than harsh. Neither the absent father nor the tyrannical father fulfills this charge. The teacher should commend the high calling warmly and encourage fathers who feel inadequate that the call is to faithful engagement, not flawless performance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Fathers specifically charged with spiritual formation, cutting across assumptions
- The mother’s role honored, but fathers not let off the hook
- ‘Do not provoke to anger’: harshness produces resentment, not godliness
- ‘Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord’: active, Christ-centered rearing
- Engaged and gentle leadership, against both the absent and the tyrannical father

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul address fathers in particular here?
- What are the ways a father can 'provoke his children to anger'?
- What does it mean to 'bring up' children in the instruction of the Lord?

Question 8

Student Question:

Fathers especially are tempted in two opposite directions: harsh, exasperating severity on one side, and passive disengagement that leaves the spiritual work to others on the other. Fathers, which way are you more tempted to lean, and what would it look like to step more fully and gently into your God-given role this week? (Mothers and others, where might you encourage and support this?)

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application puts Ephesians 6:4 to work in fathers' hearts by naming the two opposite temptations. On one side is the harsh, exasperating father, quick to criticize, hard to please, heavy on correction and light on warmth, who provokes his children to anger. On the other is the passive, disengaged father, physically present perhaps but spiritually absent, who leaves the soul-work to his wife or to no one. Most men lean toward one of these.

Invite fathers to identify their own tendency honestly. The harsh father needs to repent of severity and learn gentleness; the passive father needs to repent of abdication and step forward into engaged leadership. Both need to move toward the same center: warm, active, Christ-centered involvement in their children's lives and faith.

Make the step concrete and include the others in the room. A father might commit to leading a simple bedtime prayer, to a regular unhurried conversation with each child, to apologizing where he has provoked, or to taking up the spiritual instruction he has neglected. The question also invites mothers and others to consider how they might encourage and make room for fathers to step into this role rather than crowding it out. The aim is to strengthen, not shame, the father's engagement.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The two opposite temptations: harsh severity and passive disengagement
- The harsh father called to gentleness; the passive father called to engage
- Both moving toward warm, active, Christ-centered involvement
- Others encouraging and making room for fathers to lead

Discussion Prompts

- Which way do you lean, toward harshness or toward disengagement?
- What would stepping more fully and gently into your role look like?
- How can a family encourage a father to lead spiritually?

Question 9

Student Question:

The deepest goal of teaching the faith is not merely well-behaved or religiously informed children, but children who come to know, love, and obey the Lord for themselves, eventually making their own response to the gospel in faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ. Since faith cannot be inherited automatically or forced, how should parents understand the difference between their part (faithful teaching, modeling, and prayer) and the child's part (a genuine, personal response to Christ)? How does this both relieve and sober a parent?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block, because it clarifies the true goal of all this teaching and rightly divides the parents' part from the child's. The goal is not merely well-behaved children, nor children who can answer Bible questions, nor even children who attend faithfully, good as these are. The goal is children who come to know, love, and obey the Lord for themselves, who eventually make their own personal response to the gospel.

Here the teacher should speak clearly about what that response is, according to the New Testament pattern. A child raised in the faith is being aimed toward the day when, having heard the gospel and come to genuine faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, he or she will repent of sin, confess Christ, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:26–27), and then walk faithfully as a disciple. This is the target toward which Christian parents aim the arrow. It is important to note that this is a genuine, personal response: baptism is for those who can believe, repent, and confess, so it follows a real, owned faith rather than being something done to an uncomprehending infant. Parents teach, model, and pray toward that day, but they cannot make the decision for the child.

This is the crucial distinction: there is the parents' part and there is the child's part. The parents' part is faithful teaching, consistent modeling, and persistent prayer; they are responsible to do everything in their power to bring the child to the point of decision. But faith cannot be inherited automatically, as though it passed through the bloodline, nor can it be forced, as though a child could be coerced into genuine love for God. At some point each child must make the faith their own or reject it. The child is a responsible soul before God, not merely an extension of the parents.

This truth both relieves and sobers the parent. It relieves, because a parent is responsible for faithfulness, not for guaranteeing the outcome; godly parents have raised children who wandered (as God Himself, the perfect Father, had children who rebelled), and such parents

must not be crushed by false guilt for a choice that was finally their child's. It soberes, because it forbids complacency; parents cannot presume that a child raised in a Christian home will automatically belong to the Lord. Each child needs to be won, not merely assumed.

The teacher should hold this with great pastoral care. Some in the room are grieving a grown child who has left the faith despite faithful raising; assure them that their labor was not wasted, that God is not finished, and that prayer continues to reach where their authority no longer does. Others may be presuming on a child's churchgoing without ever having seen real faith; gently press them to aim for the heart, not just the habit. And remind all that the promise of Acts 2:39 is 'for you and for your children,' that the same gospel that saved the parents stands ready for the next generation. The parents sow and water faithfully; God gives the increase.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The goal: children who know, love, and obey the Lord for themselves
- The New Testament response: faith, repentance, confession, baptism into Christ, then faithful living (Acts 2:38)
- A genuine, personal, owned faith, not an automatic or coerced one
- The parents' part (teach, model, pray) versus the child's part (personal response)
- Relief: parents responsible for faithfulness, not for guaranteeing outcomes
- Sobering: no presuming a child raised in church automatically belongs to the Lord
- Pastoral care for parents of wandering children; the promise of Acts 2:39

Discussion Prompts

- What is the true goal of teaching a child the faith?
- What is the parents' part, and what is the child's own part?
- How does this distinction both relieve and sober a parent?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across both passages, the call to love God wholly, the order of heart before household, the all-day weaving of faith into life, the father's charge, and the goal of a child's own faith. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth about raising children in the Lord that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the whole lesson: wholehearted love for God, the order of heart before household, the all-day weaving of faith into ordinary life, the father's charge, and the goal of a child's own genuine faith. Ask each student to name one specific way Jesus is forming them, resisting vague generalities.

Different truths will grip different people. One parent needs to tend their own cooling love for God before anything else. Another needs to break the silence and begin weaving the Lord into the car and the table. A father needs to repent of harshness or of absence and step gently into his role. A grieving parent needs to rest in having been faithful and to keep praying. A complacent parent needs to aim for the child's heart, not just the habit. The single or childless can invest in the church's young. Let the Spirit choose the door.

Close by lifting students' eyes to the magnitude and the hope of this calling. To help a child come to know and love the Lord is to shape a soul for eternity, a work whose fruit may bless generations not yet born. Send students out neither complacent nor crushed, but encouraged: their part is faithful love, teaching, and prayer, and the God who gives the increase is faithful. The home is holy ground, and the ordinary work done there matters more than they know.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Synthesis of love for God, modeling, daily teaching, and the goal of faith
- Formation meeting parents, fathers, the grieving, and the childless
- The eternal weight of shaping a soul
- Faithfulness as the parents' charge; the increase as God's gift

Discussion Prompts

- What single truth about raising children in the Lord do you most need this week?
- Where is Jesus forming you, in your own love for God, your home's rhythms, or your engagement?
- How does it change things to know your part is faithfulness and God gives the increase?