

Foundation of Christian Parenting – Lesson 6
Elementary School Part I

Passages to Reflect Upon: Eph. 6:1-3, Rom. 13:1-3, Matt. 28:18, Matt. 20:28, Gal. 6:2, I Thes. 5:18, Col. 3:15-17, Phil. 4:8, Prov. 10:22, Luke 12:15, II Thes. 3:11-13, I Thes. 5: 17, Gal. 6:9, Col. 3:18-19, Luke 17:11-18, 1 Pet. 1:22, Prov. 1:8, Prov. 19:1, Prov. 6:16-20, I Pet. 3:10-12, Ps. 103:13,

1. **Introduction**

During the elementary school years children become more independent. They start walking to the neighbor's house to play, go to the park, ride a bike, etc. They become increasingly involved outside the home--school, sports, taking lessons, and other activities. As parents, we love our children and we want what is best for them as they face new experiences in life. If we continue to look at principles found in the Bible, we can guide our children in becoming faithful Christians in the future.

2. **Independence**

As the extracurricular activities increase in our children's lives parents begin to feel the increasing pace as well. Parents become chauffeurs, shuttling our children to and from the various events and activities. As parents, we see dramatic changes in our children – they are not babies anymore:

- They are talking fluently – may even be reading
- May start to “copy” their older siblings
- They become aware of what is going on in the world around them -- drugs, alcohol, stranger danger, violence and profanity
- They will begin to think, question, argue and talk-back as well as repeat things they have heard
- They will begin to challenge the parent's authority
- Become more independent persons – “Individual”

During this time, emphasizing God's expectation related to children and obedience to authority is important. Parents should emphasize that God expects children to obey their parents, that we are all to obey the laws of the land and the God ultimately has all authority (**Eph. 6:1-3, Rom. 13:1-3, Matt. 28:18**).

3. **Teaching Gratefulness Not Greediness**

During this time in our children's lives it is important to teach our children gratitude. When children are grateful they have positive attitudes and are ready to serve others rather than themselves. Grateful children grow into respectful adults. Jesus came to serve (**Matt. 20:28, Gal. 6:2**).

- Expect them to clean their rooms and bathrooms without your assistance
- Thank you note etiquette
- Discuss proper phone etiquette
- Boys open doors for ladies and seat them for dinner
- Teach girls to graciously accept help from a gentleman
- Accept NO backtalk
- Details of table manners (include taking their dirty dishes to the sink)
- Teach – “excuse me”
- Look for ways to involve them in service to others

The elementary years provide many opportunities in which lessons of gratitude can be taught. God wants us to be thankful people and this is an attitude that should be taught starting at an early age (**I Thes. 5:18, Col. 3:15-17**):

- Encourage your children to develop the traits found in **Phil. 4:8** – true, honorable, righteous, pure, lovely, good reputation, excellence and worthy of praise
- Encourage the simple pleasures (homemade gifts, games, etc.)
- Teach money management – we should not put all of our emphasis on physical things in life (**Prov. 10:22, Luke 12:15**)
- Start a tradition of adopting a family throughout the year
- Do not allow whining
- Do not allow idleness – we should teach our children that God expects us to work for what we receive (**II Thes. 3:11-13**)
- Get outside with the family
- Pray with your children each night – we should teach our children the importance of prayer (**I Thes. 5: 17**).
- Give love an appreciation for a job well done rather than buying a treat
- Give your child age-appropriate chores or responsibilities
- Teach them good things come to those who wait – we should demonstrate early on that we should not give up on doing what is right (**Gal. 6:9**).
- Children who get what they want when they want it grow up to be ungrateful and impatient adults
- Help them experience the joy of giving
- Expect our children to show respect to their parents – we should continue to set the expectation that children should honor parents (**Eph. 6:1-3**).

As parents, we are an example to our children and should model gratefulness as we live our lives. **Proverbs 15:13** reminds us that “A joyful heart makes the face cheerful, but by a painful heart the spirit is broken”. As parents, we need to remove any bitterness from our hearts and practice a heart of gratitude. In doing this, our gratitude will flow over in the hearts of our children.

- Show love and appreciation to our spouse – Paul told husbands and wives to love one another as Christ loved us (**Col. 3:18-19**)
- Don’t complain about minor annoyances
- Say “thank you” to our children
- Show appreciation and thank those that do things for us – an example of this is the one leper that returned to give thanks after being healed (**Luke 17:11-18**)
- Show appreciation and satisfaction for simple pleasures – we should give thanks in all circumstances (**I Thes 5:18**).
- Display good manners

5. **Stay Emotionally Connected**

Making an emotional or “heart” connection with your child is a special part of parenting--the heart guides a person’s spiritual life. When you connect with your children on an emotional level, they’re more willing to listen to spiritual truth and less resistant to your leadership. In **1 Peter 1:22**, Peter tells believers how to have closer relationships and this is a helpful command for parents as well, “You have purified your souls by obeying the truth in order to show sincere mutual love. So love one another earnestly from a pure heart.” Parents must continually evaluate their choices and decide what issues

are most important in family life. Some suggestions to stay emotionally connected to your child during the elementary years are:

- Go on regular lunch dates
- Volunteer as much as possible in school activities – Take advantage of this time while children love to have their parents at school
- Talk with your children -- Give them your focused attention
- Plan and do activities together—Wash the car, cook, watch a movie or do craft projects together
- Be available for late night talks
- Share spiritual lessons – the proverb writer encourages children to listen to their father and mother’s instruction (**Prov. 1:8**)
- Talk about your life and some of the mistakes you have made

6. Establishing Boundaries

When a boundary is broken it is important to discipline and clearly state the reason for the consequence. At this age, it is time to put the burden on your child’s shoulders—they can handle it.

- **Teach the value of honesty** – Tell the truth, don’t blame others when you get in trouble, ask before using someone else’s things (Prov. 19:1, Prov. 6:16-20, I Pet. 3:10-12).
- **Instill a sense of responsibility** – Use an alarm clock to wake, complete homework before free time, be ready for bed at established bedtime
- **Teach the value of compassion** – Feed and exercise your pet on an established schedule, don’t play rough with younger siblings, apologize when you hurt someone’s feelings (**Ps 103:13**).

Questions for Thought:

1. What are some of the new things children are exposed to in elementary school and how do parents prepare them for these new experiences?
2. Identify ways in which parents can teach their children to be grateful and how can you apply these ways to your family life?
3. How is discipline enforced at this stage of a child’s life?