

**Russell Kelfer**

# **Prayer**

**The Responsible  
Christian Parent**

**(Part 4)**

**# 924-B**

**Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs**

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# Prayer

I have a responsibility to teach this lesson! It is a lesson that is very convicting for me to teach. It is, however, one that is very encouraging for me to teach, as well. It is a lesson about responsibility, a specific responsibility delegated by God to parents, a part of our look at how to become responsible Christian parents.

We learned in our last lesson that the responsible Christian parent disciplines. We do that through teaching; when they walk by the way, when they rise up, when they lie down. We are to teach them the Word, the Works, the Worth, and the Ways of God.

We do that through correcting. When they violate the principles of Scripture, we correct them...not for the sake of condemnation, but for the sake of restoration. We do as God does with us. We stop them, call to their attention their error, and point them once again in God's direction.

Then finally, we do that through punishment or chastisement. Administering, when necessary, the rod of correction, for sometimes, the Scripture clearly says, mere words are not enough. The responsible parent disciplines, and though it may seem to hurt us as much as it hurts them, the Word says if we do not punish them when they need it, we are saying to them in experiential language. I simply don't love you! The responsible parent disciplines!

Now we move on to our final phase of responsibility where parenting is concerned. As we turn aside from Proverbs now to the rest of Scripture to find principles on perhaps the most vital issue of parenting of all.

We learned a few lessons back that children are a heritage of the Lord... they are His reward. God rewarded those of us who are parents, by giving us a gift or gifts wrapped in a bundle of reality, custom designed by the Master Craftsman to meet a specific need in the world to which they were sent.

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God does not give gifts lightly. We learned that in our study of Spiritual Gifts. When God gives a gift, it is given with great thought, with great purpose, with great love. (Many of us could use that very principle itself.) God gives beautiful, useful, practical, wonderful gifts, and calls them children.

These gifts have a multiplicity of uses. First, they are incredible character builders. If you want patience, you want children. Right? If you want to learn how to be a servant, you want children. Right? If you want to learn how to communicate, you want children. If you want to learn diligence, you want children. Children are a gift from God with a purpose. One of those purposes is to become heavenly sandpaper to build into your life the qualities of life you need in your life.

Praise God for the gift of children. Not only are children character builders, but secondly, they are tools in God's divine hands to make us responsible. That's part of the reason for this study, to show us that God is looking for responsible parents. That is one reason He made us parents, to make us responsible.

Don't you do a lot of growing up fast when you become parents? No longer are you living for yourselves. Now you hold in your hands a whole new package of life. Like clay, as yet unshaped into its final form, you are given the responsibility to be craftsmen in God's laboratory of living. Their wills must be broken, but not their spirits. They must be taught, trained, corrected, and chastised. You are responsible for their physical well being, their emotional well-being, their spiritual well-being. Most of us need that responsibility. We learn not only how to trust God to develop another life, we also learn the principles of discipleship. For in essence, when we disciple another are we not simply applying God's tools for responsible parents in the realm of the spirit? So God uses children to change us. And God uses children to make us responsible. Praise God for the gift of children.

But there is at least one more thing we must not forget as we look at the motives in God's heart behind giving us these precious gifts. HE also designed them as instruments of joy!

For with the pressures, the problems, the reality and the responsibility, a sovereign God knows that nothing can bring into the human heart quite as much joy as that bundle of joy we call a baby. The joy of loving, the joy of being loved, the joy of

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that first smile, the joy of those first steps, the joy of those first words, the joy of seeing growth, the joy of seeing warmth, the joy of seeing little seeds blossom into flowers that will bring radiance and beauty and the aroma of heaven into other lives are yours... and they are God's.

Even amidst the heartaches, there is joy. Even amidst the struggling to grow, there is joy. Even as your arms surround them as they cry, there is joy, because you are suddenly God's arms of comfort. Even as they make their way into the world for which we never seem to believe they are ready, there is joy, for a sovereign God now must take all the hours, all the agony, and all the answers you gave them, and sharpen the swords of their own spirits in the marketplace of life.

JOY!!! Children are a gift from God. They are a reward because they are a magnificent source of joy! But there is one joy a parent has that cannot be duplicated anywhere. A joy that transcends even the moment when that little bundle first says, "dada". It is a joy that supersedes the moment when they walk across that stage, diploma in hand, the head of their class. There is a joy so magnificent, all other joys fade into insignificance by comparison. We read about it in III John.

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

(III John 2-4)

Now this passage was obviously written to Gaius, a spiritual child to the apostle John which, of course, makes it all the more meaningful when applied to the realm of our children who are both our physical and our spiritual offspring.

And that statement made by John penetrates the very fiber of the parent-child relationship. It states simply and yet profoundly that there is one joy that a parent—physical or spiritual—can have that reaches beyond the depths of all others. It is the joy of knowing his children are walking, living in step with, the truth. Jesus is the Truth. The walk is indicative of the life. It is the step by step living out of the life that lives within. John said the greatest joy I can have is for my children to live out their lives in

step with Jesus Christ.

They may rise to greatness in the corporate kingdom. They may receive world acclaim for the music they create or the words they write. They may be acknowledged as the finest in their field; it is of no consequence, if they are not walking in the truth.

How easily we forget, as the world applauds their successes or scorns their failures, that real success or failure is not measured by the standards of this world, but by the standards of the living God.

Children, do you want to give your parents REAL joy? Walk in the truth. Young people, do you want to be a source of deep joy to your parents in their later years? Walk in the truth. Live your life in step with Jesus... and you will grant them joy unspeakable.

So, a parent's greatest joy is for his children to walk in truth. Therefore, a parent's greatest concern is the spiritual battle that goes on in his child's life. Once again, your greatest source of agony as a parent is not your child's physical illnesses, they may mean spiritual power later on. (They often do.) Your greatest source of concern is not their emotional health. Those emotional weaknesses may simply pave the way for God's strength to be revealed. Your greatest source of concern is to know that the struggle for that child's life spiritually is a struggle of life and death, and that everything really worth having hangs in the balance.

We mentioned in the last that the cardinal issue most parents need to come to understand is the fact that the struggles in that child's life, the rebellion in that child's life, is not a battle between them and society, or them and you, or them and their friends or them and their teachers, not even within themselves. Their struggle is a battle going on in the Heavens for control of their souls. Satan is feeding them the lie that they can live independently of God. God is nurturing them with seeds of Lordship, and every choice they make is a choice to yield to one of those two Spirits.

Your child's personality problem is a spiritual problem. Your child's educational problem is a spiritual problem. Your child's relationship problems are spiritual problems. You cannot separate any struggle in their lives from the real struggle between God and Satan to control their lives. So our greatest joy as parents is the joy of knowing that our children walk in truth.

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And our greatest concern as parents is the battle that is going on between Satan and God for control of their lives.

Our greatest weapon is found in Ephesians 6.

Paul, in Ephesians chapter six, outlines the weapons of this spiritual battle both offensively and defensively, and he closes with this,

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Ephesians 6:18)

Paul wrote:

For the weapons of our warfare he are not carnal (not of this world), but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; (II Corinthians 10:4,5)

Paul said that following his statement in verse 3,

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. (II Corinthians 10:3)

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, we have divine power to demolish strongholds. (II Corinthians 10:3,4 NIV)

Your greatest weapon-my greatest weapon- in the battle that is taking place in the spirit realm for our children's lives is the weapon of prayer. In Jesus' name we can focus the ammunition of the Spirit in the power of the Spirit into the realm in which the battle is being fought.

Howard Hendricks answers the question, "When do you begin praying for your children?" with this statement; "Before they are conceived." You continue praying while they are in the womb, while they are in the crib, while they are in their infancy, while they are in their adolescent years, while they are growing into adulthood, while they are facing life as mature men and women. You pray... and you pray...and you pray... and you pray...

Like Moses lifting up his arms unto God for Joshua, you and I are to lift up our hearts in prayer to God for our children

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morning, noon, night, day after day after day. And as the battle for control of their lives intensifies, so ought the intensity of our prayer life. Their struggles are not signals for frustration, but flashing lights from the control tower of eternity saying, “the warfare is greater...pray the more.”

Oh, that we might learn to turn our exasperation into prayer. Oh, that we might learn to turn our disappointments into prayer. Oh, that we might learn to turn our sorrows into prayer. Satan hates that...his design is to discourage us. If the very moves he makes to dishearten us drive us to our knees where we grab hold of the eternal power of our sovereign God to pull down those strongholds and dissolve Satan’s grasp on that child’s life, then Satan is the one who will be frustrated. We will rather through the very dark of night have switched on the full power of our God through prayer, and Satan must flee that light!

The Scriptures give us numerous examples of parents in prayer. In this lesson we will briefly look at a few of those prayers in hope that we can take God’s very words and turn them into anthems of intercession on behalf of our own children. We have no greater joy than that they walk in truth. But they are caught up in a spiritual struggle of epoch proportions for control of their lives.

Praise God the weapons of our warfare are not of this world. We have spiritual cannons that can demolish the strongholds the enemy has taken in the lives of our children. That weapon is prayer. Let’s journey now through God’s Word and listen...as godly parents pray!

As we travel through the highways of the Word, we first stop to look at how godly parents pray as they give their child to God. Our example of course is Hannah in I Samuel 1:1-11. First, we hear her before she conceives. Listen to Hannah pray:

Oh, Lord Almighty, if only you will look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life...  
(I Samuel 1:11 NIV)

Hannah learned the lesson so few young couples learn, that it is a blessing if God withholds children for a time. When God delays the giving of a child, so many times it is to teach those parents to pray and bring them to know that only God can give you a child. And so often that prayed for child, delayed by human

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standards is a special child with a special purpose, their Isaac—a gift from God in answer to prayer. Hannah understood that, and in her dependence she gave her son to God even before he was conceived. Don't forget Hannah's second prayer in verse 27:

I prayed for this child and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.  
(I Samuel 1:27)

The Living Bible adds,

So she left him there for the LORD to use.

(What a powerful thought!)

So her second prayer was prayed after the child was born reiterating to God and demonstrating to God that the child was a gift, a gift she was giving back to Him. Oh, God, teach parents to pray this prayer. We will be responsible in caring for His gift, but we are once for all and once for always giving that baby back to HIM. Have you prayed that prayer for your children? "So now I give him to the LORD?" If not, go home today, and in the quiet of your time alone with God relinquish the title of ownership: Pray I Samuel 1:27. Give your children back to their rightful owner. They are yours for a season; they are His for eternity.

The second prayer is that God might bless our children that He might have a divine purpose for them that will honor His name. One such prayer you can claim is found in Genesis 17:18. The one who is praying is Abraham; the object of his prayer was Ishmael. The prayer is simple and brief.

...If only Ishmael might live under your blessing.  
(Genesis 17:18 NIV)

Cannot we claim that verse for our own?

A third prayer, godly parents pray is found in Judges 13:8. Here the parent is Manoah. The angel of the Lord, the Lord himself, had just appeared to Manoah and had promised that he and his wife would have a son. And in verse 8 they prayed this prayer to the Lord,

Oh Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.  
(Judges 13:8 NIV)

God honored that request, and it's a prayer every young parent ought to pray at the start of every day. As they awake and begin a new day of bringing up those gifts from God, they ought



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to pray, “Oh, Lord I beg you, let the man of God, let God’s Spirit come again and teach us how to bring up these gifts you’ve given us.” God loves to honor that prayer. If any of us lack wisdom, we’re to ask of God. He gives it to us liberally, never scolding us for asking, James says. And oh, how He delights in giving wisdom for the sake of our children. Learn to pray that prayer.

The fourth prayer is a prayer of commitment and consecration. It is found in I Chronicles 29:19. The parent is David. He prayed this simple prayer,

Lord, give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion  
to keep Your commands, Your requirements, and Your  
decrees. (paraphrase)

There is the crux of arming your child for the conflict. “God, please make them sold out for you, single-minded, wholehearted in their devotion for you.” No one else is likely to be praying that prayer daily for your child but you. Are you faithfully asking God to give your child a heart that beats only for him? David did! And we should!

The fifth prayer is a prayer more specific than David’s. It is a parent interceding daily for his child’s personal walk with God. It is a cry, Lord has anything come between them and thee? It is a prayer of restoration.

Job is our godly parent praying this prayer. In Job it says,

His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes and they would invite their sisters to eat and drink with them.

When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering and he would intercede for each one of them (individually),

His reason was this.

...thinking, “Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed  
God in their hearts.”... (Job 1:4,5)

It goes on,

This was his regular custom.

David prayed for a wholehearted spirit. Job prayed for restoration of fellowship, lest his children had sinned and not been convicted of their sin. That’s a powerful prayer to pray.

The sixth prayer is a prayer for mercy. Again the parent is

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David; this time the son is Absalom, and the prayer is,

Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake...  
(II Samuel 18:5b)

David prayed for his rebellious son to the end...though heartache and pain had been his legacy, in verse 33,

Oh, Absalom, my son Absalom, if only I had died instead of you. Oh, Absalom, my son, my son. (II Samuel 18:33)

The seventh prayer is a prayer of deliverance. The Shunammite woman in II Kings 4:28-30 comes to Elisha and this is her prayer.

Lord, you promised me a son, now I'm losing him...I won't leave until you act. (paraphrase)

She was losing her son to the throes of death. You might be losing yours physically or spiritually, but she gave us a pattern of persistence in prayer. Lord, you gave me that child, now I'm losing him. The inference was, "Lord, it's not yet time, is it? I will remain here until you act." What a prayer of faith.

There are at least two more prayers for deliverance that bear our looking at. They are found in the New Testament. Let's look this time not only at the effect of the prayer on the child, but the effect of the crisis on the parent. So often, God allows our children to be stricken or to have a need to get OUR attention, to meet a spiritual need in our lives as well as a physical need in the child's. In Mark chapter 5, we read of a synagogue ruler named Jairus whose daughter was sick and we read this:

one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet

and pleaded earnestly with him. "My daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her, so that she will be healed and live."  
(Mark 5:22.23 NIV)

While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. Why bother the teacher any more?"

Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid, just believe..." (Mark 5:35-36 NIV)

The first result was a healed child, but perhaps the greatest result was the growth of the faith of a ruler named Jairus.

John 4 tells us of another incident with similar results.

While in Cana of Galilee there was a Royal official whose son lay sick in Capernaum. He went to Jesus and begged him to come and heal his son who was close to death.

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“Sir,” he pled, “come down before my child dies.”

Jesus replied, “You may go, your son will live.”

So he and all his household believed. (John 4:46,49,50,53)

So often, God allows a crisis with the children to cause the parents to pray, that someone in that family may come to know a God who loves those children even more than they do. Oh, the power of praying parents.

Perhaps, the most powerful prayer of all for parents to study is a prayer of intercession calling on the perfect parent to care for those to whom He had given His Son. It is found in John chapter seventeen, and the context is obviously Jesus praying to the Father about us. Oh, what we can learn about prayer from that prayer. Let’s look quickly.

First look at verse 6. There Jesus acknowledges that those spiritual children were a gift. We can pray that prayer about our children as well. Listen:

I have told these men all about you. They were in the world, but then you gave them to me. Actually, they were always yours, and you gave them to me. Actually, they were always Yours, and You gave them to Me; and they have obeyed You.

Now they know that everything I have is a gift from You,  
(John 17:6,7 TLB)

Our children can come to understand grace by watching us pray for them. When they realize that all we have is a gift from God, even them, the reality of that truth can grip them personally.

In verse 9, Jesus gives us a pattern for prioritizing our prayer lives. He says this,

I’m not praying now for the whole world. At the moment, I’m focusing in on my own family. (Paraphrase)

That’s a worthwhile thing for us to do.

In verse 10, Jesus acknowledges again that ownership belongs to God. Listen to Him pray,

(Father) all of them, since they are Mine belong to You and You have given them back to Me with everything else of Yours and so they are My glory. (TLB)

In verse 11, Jesus prays the prayer of a parent who is leaving his children physically, either through death or separation.

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Listen,

Now I'm leaving the world, and leaving them behind, and coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your own care-all those You have given me-so that they will be united, with none missing.

During My time here I have kept safe within Your family all of these You gave Me. I guarded them so that not one perished, except the son of hell, as the Scriptures foretold.

And now I am coming to you. I have told them many things while I was with them so that that they would be filled with My joy.”  
(John 17:11-13 TLB)

Beginning in verse 14, Jesus acknowledges the depth of the warfare and asks not for deliverance from but deliverance through the battle. Parents, pray this prayer with Jesus:

Father, I gave them your words. The world system, the enemy and his legions hate them because they will not conform to this world.

I don't ask you to take them out of this world, I'm asking you instead to guard them from the evil one.

They are not a part of this world any more than I AM.  
(John 17:14-16 Paraphrase)

Then in verse 17 He prays for their holiness,

Make them pure and Holy through your word, your word is the Truth.  
(Paraphrase)

(Oh, God, teach us to pray that prayer morning, noon and night.)

Then in verse 18, He prays for their ministry. Listen,

As You sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.  
(TLB)

“Lord, give them a ministry, a purpose, a reason for living,” is what He is saying.)

I pray not only for them but for those they will lead to you.  
(John 17:20 Paraphrase)

He prayed for their children and for their spiritual children. What a powerful prayer to pray for ours.

Then He prays for unity in the family in verse 21,

My prayer is that they will be one-united in spirit as a family-that others will see in their unity the very unity of the trinity as oneness balanced with uniqueness.

(Paraphrase)

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That's a thought we could meditate on for days. May their unity be as the unity of the Father with the Son. In verse 22 He prays for fellowship. In verse 23 for hope, and then He concludes in verse 26,

Father, keep pouring your love into their lives, the very same love you poured upon your own Son. (Paraphrase)

Oh, dear God, what a beautiful pattern of prayer. Why not take 3 months or 6 months out of your life and pray through John 17 for your children? The pattern is perfect. The power is awesome. It is the very voice of Jesus praying for His own. What greater love could a parent have than that? What more beautiful example of how to pray?

Do you see the power God has granted to each of us to intercede in the conflict between Satan and God on behalf of our children?

- What is our greatest joy?  
For them to walk in truth!
- What is our greatest concern?  
That they are the objects of an eternal battle for control of their lives!
- What is our greatest weapon?  
We have the power of God at our fingertips. We have the power of prayer... and responsible parents pray!
- And what is the pattern to follow?  
Can we not pray through the Scriptures the prayers of godly parents who prayed?

Can we not use David and Abraham and Job and Manoah and Hannah and the Shunammite woman as examples of how to pray? And better still can we but bow our heads at the feet of Jesus as He in John chapter 17 intercedes for the children given to Him by the Father. Oh, what a pattern, our pattern for powerful prayer as parents.

Some of us need to make a new commitment to God to intensify our prayer life on behalf of our children. We may need to set aside some time each day, separate from our quiet times, just to pray for them. We may need to start a prayer notebook using the character qualities of Godliness as our guide, praying daily for those qualities each child needs. We may need to make

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a book of the prayers Godly parents prayed in Scripture or of John 17 and devote ourselves to praying through those prayers for each child. We may need to fast and pray at least once a week for a child who has been caught up in the heat of the conflict between Satan and God for their life.

Those are just concepts, just ideas, but the precepts are final. We must intensify our prayer commitment to our children if we are to be responsible parents. Responsible parents discipline, and responsible parents pray. Responsible parents teach. Responsible parents correct. Responsible parents provide. Responsible parents demonstrate by life and by word what it means to follow Jesus. But I believe there is one more thing responsible parents must always do. We've seen the greatest joy a parent can have, the greatest concern a parent should have, the greatest weapon a parent has, and the greatest examples a parent has.

Let's, in closing, look at the greatest gift a parent can give. Because you and I can discipline our children according to the book, pray for our children according to the book, and instruct our children according to the book, and we will have imparted all of God's truth without necessarily demonstrating all of God's character.

God's character is wrapped up in one four-letter word, "LOVE." Love is the divine ingredient that when folded into the blend of discipline, instruction, and prayer causes a supernatural simmering of divine grace, and the result is a life that is molded into an image that says "Jesus."

Without love, discipline becomes legalism. Without love, instruction becomes only knowledge. Without love, prayer becomes hypocritical and powerless. A parent who never learns to love, never learns to be a parent. There are times when they are not loveable, but there are no times when they are not to be loved.

In closing, I would like to take the liberty of taking 1 Corinthians chapter 13, and translating it or paraphrasing it into a message from God to us as parents. It is not a misuse of the Scriptures for the passage is intended to reach even beyond the scope of parenthood. I simply for this one moment want us to apply it particularly to this most important object of love... our children. I must be honest. God has really been dealing with me

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through this passage. I Corinthians 13: paraphrased for parents.

Though I can speak with eloquence of the noblest of men, even speak or sing with the voice of an angel, If I do not love my children I am only a useless noisemaker playing the wrong notes... in the symphony of life.

Even if I have prophetic powers, unique discernment...if the whole world beats a path to my door seeking my counsel or wisdom... but I don't know how to love my children, what good would my ministry be? If I had such faith that I could simply ask and mountains would be moved; miracles performed... leaving the world in awe... my life would still be worthless; worth less than nothing (if I had not learned to love my children.)

I could be the world's most unselfish man; giving away my time and my money with no thought for my own needs or desires, I could be the world's greatest martyr, and be burned at the stake for my faith...but if I had never through it all, learned to love my children...there would be no value at all in my martyrdom. What do I mean 'love my children?' I mean my responses to them would always be patient (I would be willing to wait on God to change them, loving them all the while.)

My spirit would be marked by kindness (I would be sensitive to their feelings, and aware of their hurts.) I would not be envious of their success (comparing it selfishly with my own). Nor would I inflict upon them the product of my pride (as though I could share in THEIR accomplishments).

I would not be struggling to protect my rights, but I would gladly give them away deferring to their needs instead. I would not be known to be irritable or touchy. Nor known as one who holds grudges, or refuses to forgive... I won't have a chip on my shoulder, expecting them to fail.

I won't be happy that they must suffer punishment, But rather I will grieve....and I will rejoice when they walk with God and are blessed.

If I really love them, I will be loyal to them no matter what they do, I'll believe in them, I'll expect the best of them, and I'll stand beside them through all kinds of trouble. Weeping when they weep.

All of the other things I have and all of the other things I do will one day disappear. Ah, but love... in particular the love I have for my children...it will remain...and it will remain alive in them forever. I can give them my faith.

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I can give them my hope. And they will be blessed. But oh, what they long to experience above all and over all...they long for the greatest gift of all MY LOVE.

(I Corinthians 13:1-8,13 Paraphrase)

Oh, beloved, the beautiful triangle of parenthood:

We DISCIPLINE = to teach them our faith.

We PRAY for them = to communicate our hope.

We LOVE them = to demonstrate the character of our God.

All are so vital...none must be omitted. But the greatest of these—is it not LOVE?

May we go forth, refreshed in our commitment and renewed in our priorities, by God's grace to become Responsible Christian Parents.

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