

# **Creating a Culture of Marriage and Family in the Home and in the School**

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## God's Order and Design for Marriage

On the sixth day of creation, God created man and woman in his own image and joined them together as husband and wife. Marriage was not a human invention. God established it and blessed it. Marriage is a sacred estate, instituted by God Himself.

But was the union of Adam and Eve merely a cultural arrangement? No, it was far more profound. Their union pointed forward to something greater, namely, the union of Christ and His Church. The relationship between Christ and His bride was not patterned after Adam and Eve; rather, the first marriage in the garden foreshadowed the marriage of the Lamb and His bride, the Church.

So, it is today: the union of a husband and a wife is a living witness to something greater. St. Paul, in Ephesians 5, draws a direct comparison between an earthly marriage and the union between Christ and His Church. “This mystery is profound,” he writes, “and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church” (Eph. 5:32). All marriages—from the first marriage in the garden to every union established today—are designed to reflect the union between Christ and His bride, the Church.

This raises important questions: Why is the relationship between a husband and a wife compared to that of Christ and the church? How does Christ love the church, and how does the Church submit to Christ? How does this union proclaim the Gospel? How can the marriage of a Christian man and woman today serve as a living proclamation of the Gospel? What does a husband, as a male, need from his wife and what does a wife, as a female, need from her husband? What is the difference between how a man relates to his wife and how a woman relates to her husband?

Before we answer these questions, we must step back and consider how God relates to His people from Genesis to Revelation. We begin with the covenant relationship between God and Israel in the Old Testament. Then we turn to the fulfillment of that covenant in Christ’s relationship with the Church in the New Testament. Finally, we will focus on Paul’s teaching in Ephesians chapter five, applying it to the relationship between a husband and his wife.

### The Relationship between God and His people in the Old Testament

After the LORD God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, He called them into a special covenant relationship. At Mount Sinai, God said to the Israelites, “You shall be my treasured possession … and you shall be to me a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6). In response, the people pledged their loyalty, saying, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (Exodus 19:8). This covenant was not a mere contract—it was a sacred union. The LORD Himself describes it in deeply personal relational terms: “I am married to you” (Jer 3:14, NKJV). Through the prophet Ezekiel, God says, “I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you … and you became mine” (Ezekiel 16:8). The prophet Isaiah echoes this divine intimacy: “For your Maker

is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer" (Isaiah 54:5).

Despite God's love, Israel was unfaithful. They broke the marriage bond (Jer 31:32) committing spiritual adultery by turning to other gods. Israel divorced herself from the LORD God. The prophet Ezekiel (in chapters 16 and 23) and the prophet Hosea vividly depict Israel's betrayal and idolatry. Yet through all her unfaithfulness, God continued to call her back, offering forgiveness and restoration.

Though Israel turned away, God remained faithful. He promised a future marriage that would renew the broken relationship. Through the prophet Hosea, God vowed, "I will betroth you to me forever ... in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy ... and you shall know the Lord" (Hosea 2:19-20). The prophet Isaiah proclaims a similar hope: "You will no more be termed Forsaken, but you will be called My Delight Is in Her. As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isaiah 62:4-5). Ultimately, God promised a new covenant—one that would not be like the old, which they broke: "Behold, the days are coming ... when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31-32). This enduring love of God, portrayed as a faithful Husband to His people, forms a foundational theme throughout the Old Testament and prepares the way for the coming of Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church.

### **The Relationship between Christ and the Church**

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises throughout the Old Testament. He came down from heaven to unite himself to his bride—the church. At the wedding in Cana, Jesus performed His first miracle by turning water into wine (John 2). This miracle brought joy to the wedding party, but it also served as a sign that the long-awaited Bridegroom had arrived. When questioned by the Pharisees about why His disciples did not fast like others, Jesus replied, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" (Luke 5:34). With these words, Jesus openly identified Himself as the Bridegroom and His disciples as His wedding guests.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the "daughter of Zion" rejoiced, fulfilling the words of the prophet Zechariah: "Behold, your king is coming to you... humble and mounted on a donkey" (Zech 9:9). This was no mere political king; this was the Bridegroom-King come to bring salvation to His beloved.

On Good Friday, Jesus laid down His life on the cross. He gave Himself up for His bride to redeem her from sin. His love was sacrificial. On the third day, He rose from the dead, victorious over sin and death. Now exalted, Christ is the head of the Church—His body (Ephesians 5:23).

On the last day, Christ will return in glory to receive His bride into His eternal kingdom. In the parable of the ten virgins, the five wise virgins were looking forward to the grooms' coming. So also, the faithful await the cry, "Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" (Matt 25:6). On

that day, the saints will be raised in glory, clothed in immortality, and welcomed into the marriage feast of the Lamb which will never end (Revelation 21:2-4).

## **God's order and design for the husband**

We first examined the covenant relationship between God and Israel in the Old Testament, as well as the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church. Now, we turn our attention to the relationship between a husband and a wife. First, we will focus on God's order and design for the husband. In this context, there are five duties given to a husband—things a wife, as a woman, needs from her husband.

### **(1) The husband as head**

Before Eve was created, God gave His command directly to Adam: “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die” (Genesis 2:16–17). Then, from Adam’s rib, God formed the woman and brought her to the man. She came from him, not the other way around. The order is important: Adam was formed first, then Eve (2 Timothy 2:13; 1 Corinthians 11:8–9). Adam, therefore, was given the role of headship. He was entrusted with the task of teaching God’s Word to his wife, including the command about the trees in the garden. As the theological head of the family, Adam was to lead with faithfulness, instructing his wife in the truth of God’s Word.

But Adam failed in this responsibility. When the serpent deceived Eve, Adam did not intervene. He neither corrected the serpent’s lies nor protected his wife from disobedience. Though she ate first, it was Adam to whom God came and called: “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (Genesis 3:11). Why? Because Adam was the head. And rather than accepting responsibility, he shifted the blame—first to his wife, then to God Himself. The fall brought sin and death to both Adam and Eve, and together they needed redemption.

So, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son. Born of the virgin Mary, Jesus is both true God and true man—yet without sin. Where Adam failed, Christ triumphed. Jesus took the responsibility to bring salvation to mankind. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). His leadership was not domineering or harsh, but humble and sacrificial. He washed His disciples’ feet. He taught them not to lord authority over others. He humbled Himself even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). By His death and resurrection, He secured our redemption.

Now exalted to the right hand of the Father, Jesus reigns as “the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:17–18). He was appointed “to be head over everything for the church, which is His body” (Ephesians 1:22–23; see also Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 2:19). Christ is the head of the Church, and the Church is His body. He leads, and the Church joyfully submits to Christ.

Husbands, you are the head, and your wife is the body (1 Corinthians 11:3). Just as Christ leads the Church, so you are called to be a faithful leader for the sake of your wife. By God’s

grace, lead well—not with pride or force, but with humility and love. Do not lie, but always speak the truth. Do not be passive like Adam, but take the initiative to care for your wife. You are the theological leader in the home. Therefore, take your wife and children to church every Sunday. Lead them in daily devotion and prayer. Sing hymns together as a family.

## **(2) The husband's love toward his wife**

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus allowed himself to be arrested, knowing full well the suffering that awaited Him. He endured an unfair trial, was scourged by Pilate's soldiers, mocked by the crowds, and ultimately crucified upon a cross. His love was sacrificial, always directed toward the salvation of His bride, the Church. He bled for her, died for her, and rose again to give her life. This love is the pattern for all husbands.

Husbands, God calls you to love your wife. As it is written, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). This love—*agape* in the Greek—is not merely an emotion, but a will to act in a loving way toward your wife. By God's grace, love her as Christ loved the Church. Do not live selfishly, but give of yourself for her sake. Do not be prideful, but conduct yourself with humility. Your love for your wife flows from the love Christ has shown to you.

## **(3) The husband as provider.**

In the wilderness, God provided the Israelites with bread from heaven and quail to sustain them (Exodus 16:1–21). During his ministry, Jesus fed a crowd of over 5,000 with just five loaves and two fish, revealing His care and compassion (John 6:1–14). After this miracle, Jesus declared, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven" (John 6:51), identifying Himself as the true source of life. He also feeds us with His very body and blood in the Lord's Supper. God also provides us with daily bread—everything we need to support this body and life.

Husbands, God calls you to provide for your family. As the head of the household, you are entrusted with the role of breadwinner. It is your duty to work diligently so that your family has what they need—shelter, clothing, food, and other daily necessities. However, do not turn money into an idol. Financially support your household with faithfulness and integrity. If your wife contributes some income, she is not replacing your role, but assisting you in your office as breadwinner.

## **(4) The husband as protector**

Jesus paid for our sin with His holy and precious blood. By His cross and open tomb, He conquered our enemies of sin, death, and the devil. Now, He freely blesses His Church with forgiveness, life, and salvation. Yet, Satan still rages against the Church. He prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). But Christ gives His Church a sure and steadfast promise: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Though we wrestle not against flesh and blood but

against the spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12), we do not stand alone. Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

Husbands, protect your wife as Christ protects His Church. You are called to defend your wife in the face of danger. Be the one to check out the strange noise at the door. Stand between her and danger. Look after her physical well-being, and guard her emotional health with patience and gentleness. Keep her safe so that she may rest securely in your strength and protection.

### **(5) The husband's tender care toward his wife**

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus showed mercy and compassion to those who were in need. He healed the sick, cleansed lepers, gave sight to the blind, and even raised the dead. He welcomed little children, holding them in His arms and blessing them. Even now, in a world broken by sin, the Church endures trials, tribulations, and sorrow. Yet in Christ, all things work together for her good (Romans 8:28). He invites her to pray assuring her that whatever she asks in His name, He will do it (John 14:13). Gentle and lowly in heart, Jesus offers rest for her weary soul (Matthew 11:28–29). In Christ, the Church finds refuge and strength, peace and forgiveness.

Husbands, in like manner, treat your wife with tender care. Be kind to her, even when she is upset or frustrated. Scripture commands, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them” (Colossians 3:19). Do not harm her—neither with your hands nor with your words. Instead, treat her with compassion and gentleness. Cherish her, not only because she is your wife, but also because she is a woman—created by God and worthy of honor.

### **Finally, a Word on Confession and Forgiveness**

Husbands, because of your sinful nature, your calling as head of the household will not be perfect. As God said to Eve, “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Genesis 3:16)—this points to the reality of brokenness even in marriage. You will at times try to dominate rather than lead with humility. You will fail to love your wife as Christ loves the Church. Selfishness and pride will creep in. But when you fall short—and you will—confess your sin. Humbly say to your wife, “I am sorry. Please forgive me.” Let repentance and forgiveness be constant in your marriage. Then, go to church with your wife. Hear the Gospel. Receive Christ’s gifts in Word and Sacrament. God in Christ Jesus forgives you. And by God’s grace, the Gospel will strengthen and renew you to be a faithful husband.

### **God’s order and design for the wife**

Now, we turn our attention to God’s order and design for the wife. In this context, there are five duties given to a wife—things a husband, as a man, needs from his wife.

## **(1) The wife as helper**

The Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:18). So, the Lord God took a rib from Adam’s side and fashioned it into a woman. Adam was created first and given the responsibility of headship. Eve was created as his helper—not as lesser, but as his counterpart. She is his companion, equal in value yet different from him. She complements him. She assists him, supports him, and strengthens him.

Wives, God calls you to help your husband. When he is weak, encourage him. When he errs, speak the truth in love. When he asks for your wisdom, offer godly insight. The influence you have on your husband can be profound. There is truth in the saying, “Behind every good man is a good woman.” Your work may not always be public, but it is powerful in a good sense. When your husband flourishes in his calling, it is often because you have faithfully stood beside him. His fruit is, in part, your fruit. When he shines, you shine too.

## **(2) The wife’s willing submission to her husband**

When the fullness of time had come, the angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary and told her that by the power of the Holy Spirit she would conceive and give birth to the long-awaited Savior. In humble faith, Mary responded, “Behold, I am the maidservant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). Mary listened to God’s Word and believed in the miraculous presence of the Holy One within her womb. She willingly submitted in faithful obedience to the angel’s message. Her humble spirit serves as a model for the Church—a stark contrast to Eve in the Garden, who doubted God’s Word.

Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her. He cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word. He speaks to her words of forgiveness, life, and salvation. At the altar, He feeds her with His own body and blood. He bore her sins, washed her clean, and made her holy, without spot or blemish.

In response, the Church receives Christ’s gifts with thanksgiving. She trusts in His salvation and acknowledges Him as her Head. She gladly follows Him, denying the world’s definition of success and bearing the cross of suffering. Even when persecuted for His name, she perseveres. Just as Christ humbled Himself for her, so she humbles herself in loving service and joyful submission to Him who died and rose for her. The Church’s willing submission to Christ sets the example for all wives (Ephesians 5:24).

Wives, you are called to submit to your husband as a response to his Christ-like love. When you submit to your husband, you are acknowledging and honoring his headship. He is called to lead with sacrificial love, and you are called to follow him. You affirm his God-given responsibility to lead the family, and you joyfully walk with him—even in seasons of hardship—because he loves you. Submission is not an act of humiliation or inferiority. It is a beautiful and voluntary act of faith, a response to your husband who lays down his life for you, just as Christ did for His Bride, the Church.

### **(3) Wives, nurture your husband and family**

The Church, through the Word, calls all people to believe in Christ as their Savior. Like the master in the parable, she invites “the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame” until her house is filled (Luke 14:21). By the washing of water with the Word, she begets new children of God in Holy Baptism. Their sins are washed away, and they are made clean. The Church then nurtures her children in the Word of God and feeds them at the altar with the food Christ Himself provides—His very body and blood.

Wives, care for your husband and nurture your family with love and faithfulness. Attend to the needs of your children, giving them the daily care and attention they require. Manage the household with wisdom and order, overseeing meals and other tasks so that your home may be a place of peace and provision. While your husband may assist you in these duties, you serve as the primary caretaker of the home—a noble calling that blesses your family and reflects God’s design in marriage.

### **(4) Wives, thank your husband**

In the Divine Service, Christ is truly present with His beloved Church. He comes to her with His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation through His Word and Sacraments. The Church receives these gifts in faith and responds with thanksgiving to God for His merciful goodness. Faith, by its very nature, responds with gratitude for what it receives. Christ gives, and the Church responds (see also Revelation 5:13; 7:12).

So also, wives, give thanks to your husband for all that he does for you. Express your appreciation in both word and deed. Show him respect and honor for his efforts, whether great or small. Let him know that you are truly grateful for the ways he provides, protects, and serves. A heart of thankfulness encourages and strengthens him in his vocation.

### **(5) The wife’s outward and inner beauty**

Christ sanctifies and cleanses His Church “with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:26). She is now “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27). Christ has clothed her with the garments of salvation. He has covered her with the robe of His righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). When Christ returns in glory, His Bride, the Church, will descend “out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2,9). She will be “arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright” (Rev. 19:8), the radiant garments given her by her Lord.

So also, wives, possess a beauty and a pleasant appearance for your husband alone, not for the eyes of others. Your adornment is a gift to him, a sign of your devotion and love. But even more precious is the inner beauty you possess—a beauty that shines forth in your words, your actions, and how you carry yourself each day. St. Peter urges you to let your adorning be inside your heart—the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4).

## **Finally, a Word on Confession and Forgiveness**

Wives, because of your sinful nature, your office as helper will not be perfect. Your willingness to submit to your husband will not be perfect either. After the fall into sin, the Lord said to Eve, “Your desire shall be for your husband” (Gen. 3:16). This is a warning that even within marriage, sin will be evident. Your sinful desire will be to rule over your husband. You will be tempted to be the leader, to grasp for control, and to act in selfishness and pride. You will struggle to serve with joy and humility. But when you fall short—and you will—confess your sin. Humbly say to your husband, “I am sorry. Please forgive me.” Let repentance and forgiveness be constant in your marriage. Then, go to church with your husband. Hear the Gospel. Receive Christ’s gifts in Word and Sacrament. For in Christ, your sins are forgiven. And by God’s grace, the Gospel will strengthen and renew you to be a faithful wife.

## **Conclusion**

St Paul writes, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). When God united Adam and Eve as husband and wife, that union pointed to something greater. It pointed to a mystery that was hidden for ages but is now revealed in Christ. It pointed to the ultimate union between Christ and His bride, the Church. Now that Christ has come, the mystery is unveiled: the true and eternal marriage is that of Christ and the Church. Every earthly marriage finds its meaning and purpose in that greater reality.

The union of Christ and the Church is the proclamation of the Gospel. In Christ, we see perfect love, faithfulness and humility. He gave Himself up for His bride, dying and rising again for her salvation. In the Church, we see faith, willful submission, and a joyful response to Christ. This is the Gospel in action: Christ laying down His life, and the Church receiving His love with thanksgiving.

Husbands, by God’s grace, lead your family with humility and faithfulness. Love your wife as Christ loved the Church—sacrificially and selflessly. Provide for them, protect them, and bring them to church every Sunday. In doing so, your wife and children will see a reflection of Christ in your life. Wives, by God’s grace, come alongside your husband as a helper, trusting in his leadership. Submit to him willingly, as the Church submits to Christ. Nurture your family with love and care. In doing so, your husband and children will see a reflection of the Church in your life.

Together, your marriage becomes a living testimony to the Gospel—a picture of Christ and His Bride for the world to see. In this way, you are creating a culture of a Christian marriage in the home, in the church, and in the world.

# God's Order and Design for the Family

## Introduction

Children are a blessing from God. They are a gift, a precious treasure entrusted to our care. As the psalmist says, “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them” (Psalm 127:3, 5). Parenting, then, is not merely a duty—it is a sacred privilege, a calling from God Himself.

Parenting is not easy. The days are often long and exhausting—changing diapers, cleaning up messes, helping children with homework, driving them to practice, keeping peace in the home, preparing meals, and getting little ones ready for bed. In the midst of the chaos, it's easy to feel worn out or overwhelmed.

And yet, parenting is also filled with deep joy. There is joy in watching our children grow. There is joy in hearing them sing hymns, seeing them perform in their first recital, watching them walk across the stage at graduation, and one day celebrating their marriage and seeing them raise children of their own. These are moments of great blessing and thanksgiving.

But the greatest joy of all—the true goal of parenting—is to bring our children to Jesus. We want them to be baptized, to know Christ, to trust in Him, to walk in His ways, and to love whatever is just and true and good. Our goal in parenting is to hand down the Christian faith to the next generation. Some parents will say that the goal of parenting is for their children to have academic success, good manners, a strong character, be financially independent, and have careers they enjoy. While these may be worthy pursuits, the ultimate goal is that our children confess the Christian faith, be an active member of a faithful Lutheran Church, be sustained in the body and blood of our Lord in Holy Communion, and live lives of repentance and faith in the forgiveness of sins. Above all, we want to see our children and grandchildren in heaven.

Therefore, parents take seriously your sacred calling. Bring your children to the waters of Holy Baptism, connecting them to Jesus' death and resurrection. Attend the Divine Service with them every Sunday, where Christ gives His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Teach them God's Word and the Small Catechism. Read Bible stories to your little ones. Hold regular family devotions. Pray with them and for them. Sing hymns together. Train them in virtue, wisdom, piety, good works, and in healthy habits. It is our prayer that through such faithful instruction, they will grow to “yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11).

## The Fourth Commandment

God has entrusted parents with the authority to care for, nurture, and raise their children. This authority is given by God. It is divinely instituted. Parents are called to exercise it with humility, faithfulness, and gentleness, always mindful that they stand in the place of God for the sake of

their children. As such, they serve as His earthly representatives—gifts from God given for the protection and blessing of their children.

In turn, children are called to receive this authority with honor and obedience. They are to listen to their parents, trust them, and learn from them. The Fourth Commandment speaks directly to this, calling children to honor their father and their mother (Exodus 20:12). St Paul echoes this saying, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1). To honor one’s parents, therefore, is to honor God Himself. Obeying the Fourth Commandment is an expression of obedience to the First Commandment. Likewise, to dishonor one’s parents is to dishonor God. Proverbs warns about disobeying one’s parents: “Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old” (Proverbs 23:22), and again, “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man despises his mother” (Proverbs 15:20).

### **The Meaning and Practice of Discipline**

When parents discipline their child according to the Word of God, they are forming a disciple. Children learn by example—and their parents are the first and most influential teachers. Children watch and imitate what their parents do and do not do, what they say and do not say. They learn from our church attendance—whether faithful or sporadic. They learn from us how we speak to others, how we handle conflict, how we use a smartphone, and how we live out the Christian faith. They learn from us what it means to repent when we sin and how to forgive one another. Over time, children begin to resemble their parents’ values and their confession of faith. A child’s character often reflects the home they were raised in. This is why faithful parenting matters so deeply.

The Greek word for discipline, *paideia*, encompasses instruction and correction. It refers to the full process of forming, educating, and shaping a child in the way of our Lord. In parenting, both instruction and correction go hand in hand as part of raising children in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Let us look at these one at a time.

First and foremost, discipline begins with instruction. God has given parents the responsibility to teach their children, but the primary responsibility falls upon the father. Throughout Scripture, God calls fathers to instruct their children in His Word and according to His ways. In the Old Testament, the Lord chose Abraham “that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice” (Genesis 18:19). God spoke to the people of Israel—especially to the fathers—saying, “Make [My Word] known to your children and your children’s children” (Deuteronomy 4:9). Solomon says, “A wise son hears his father’s instruction” (Proverbs 13:1). This divine calling for fathers continues into the New Testament. 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). Martin Luther recognized this biblical pattern and urged the head of the household—especially the father—to teach the Word of God and the Small Catechism to his family.

The father is called to take the lead in teaching the Word of God to his children, yet the mother plays a vital role as well. She teaches the faith as she reads Bible stories, prays with her

children, and nurtures them in the faith throughout the day. As Solomon writes, “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching” (Proverbs 1:8). Both parents, therefore, are called to teach. God gives the mandate to parents saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). Parents are to take every opportunity to teach God’s Word—whether at home, on the road, at bedtime, or at the start of the day.

Parents are entrusted with the task of teaching their children the Word of God. Through the Scriptures, children learn how to live with faith toward God and love toward one another. The Ten Commandments reveal what is right and what is wrong. God’s Word instructs children to live as baptized children of God walking in the way of Christ, which stands in contrast to the way of the world and of unbelief.

Alongside God’s Word, parents establish rules, boundaries, and expectations in the home—such as, pick up your toys, clean your room, clear off the table, etc. Children are to be taught obedience, respect, sharing, and personal responsibility. These household rules reflect the order that God has built into His creation—especially within the family.

Parents must also warn their children against sin—such as unbelief, disrespect for authority, anger, hatred, immorality, stealing, gossip, and discontentment. At the same time, they are to teach what is good, such as: faith, the blessings of godly authority, the sanctity of life and marriage, the proper use of possessions, the value of a good reputation, and the virtue of contentment. In all things, children are to be taught to renounce sin and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives with faith in Christ.

This teaching happens during daily devotions, mealtime prayers, casual conversations at home or in the car, and more formal instruction in Sunday School and Catechism class. Most importantly, children receive the Gospel when they hear the Scriptures read and preached in the Divine Service. There, the Holy Spirit works through the Word and Sacrament nurturing faith and good works.

Secondly, discipline includes correction. When a child’s behavior is wrong or harmful, the role of the parent is to guide the child’s heart away from sin and toward what is good and godly.

True discipline is driven by love, and not by anger, frustration, or a desire for control. It must be firm, yet always loving. It must be done for the sake of the child’s well-being. As Scripture says, “He who loves his son is diligent to discipline him” (Proverbs 13:24). God Himself disciplines His children in love: “For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6). In the same way, Christian parents discipline their children out of deep love and a desire for them to walk in the truth of God’s Word with faith in Christ.

Discipline is never easy—for the parent or for the child. It can be painful to correct those you love, and it may be hard for children to understand that discipline is an act of love. Yet Scripture assures us, “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but

later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11). Just as pruning a fruit tree may seem harsh, or athletic training may be grueling, so too discipline, though difficult, produces self-control and respect.

For this reason, parents cannot stand by while their children wander down paths that lead away from Christ. Love compels them to correct, guide, and train their children in righteousness and in virtuous living.

Correcting a child's misbehavior can take on many forms. Often, it is verbal: "Don't hit your sister," "Clean up your room," or "Be respectful when someone is talking." Verbal correction may include a gentle reminder, a firm warning, or a strong rebuke—depending on the situation. Sometimes, it involves a consequence like sending a child to their room or giving them time to reflect. Whatever form it takes, the purpose is to guide the child back to what is right and reinforce what has already been taught.

Scripture also speaks of physical correction, particularly in the book of Proverbs. "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him" (Proverbs 13:24). And "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15). And "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother" (Proverbs 29:15). These verses teach that appropriate physical correction, when done in love and self-control, may be necessary to curb sinful behavior.

In cases of willful disobedience or open defiance, a calm and measured slap on the hand or a spank on bottom can serve as a clear and effective consequence. Though unpleasant at the moment, this form of discipline sends a strong message that certain behaviors are unacceptable.

Therefore, Christian parents are called to take seriously their God-given responsibility to discipline their children with both instruction and correction. In doing so, they are not only guiding their children toward righteousness, but also making disciples—raising children who know Christ, who walk in His ways, and who loves one another.

### **Sorrow over sin and the forgiveness of sins**

The purpose of correction—whether verbal or physical—is not simply behavior modification, but true repentance. Discipline should lead the child to recognize the wrong they have done and to feel sorrow over their sin. A simple and sincere "I am sorry" is a sign of a contrite heart.

Parents should actively teach their children how to confess their sins toward those they've wronged. When a child hits a sibling, lies, or disobeys, they should be taught to say the words, "I am sorry," not out of mere habit, but from the heart. They should be encouraged to name the wrong they've done and express genuine regret.

But confession must be followed by forgiveness. Parents should not respond with dismissive phrases like, "It's okay," or "No big deal." These expressions minimize sin and bypass the

opportunity to hear a word of forgiveness. Instead, the parent—or the offended sibling—should speak clear and comforting words of forgiveness: “I forgive you and God forgives you in Christ.” In this way, discipline becomes a beautiful opportunity to teach both repentance and forgiveness. Through sorrow over sin and the hearing of forgiveness, the child is continually directed to the mercy of Christ and the power of His forgiveness.

## **Conclusion**

God entrusts parents with the sacred task of raising the children He has given them. This calling is both joyful and demanding. It requires patience, sacrifice, and constant prayer.

Sadly, the devil and the world seek to lead our children astray and to draw them away from Christ. It grieves the heart when a child departs from the faith and follows the ways of the world. Yet in the face of this, we cling to the promises of God, trust in the forgiveness of sins in Christ, and continue steadfast in prayer.

May God grant us wisdom, courage, and faithfulness as we parent. May we love our children, provide for them, protect them, guide them, and teach them the way of Christ and of His precious Word. Let us pray earnestly that our children—and our grandchildren—remain in the faith, be active members of a faithful Lutheran Church, and live lives with faith toward God and love for one another. May we and our children one day be together in heaven.

Thank you.

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