

God's Blueprint For The Home

Lesson 7: God's Blueprint For Raising Children



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

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Learn how to raise children in a way that pleases God

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW209

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Lesson 7:

God's Blueprint For Raising Children

Being a parent is one of the greatest responsibilities and opportunities that can ever be afforded to us while we live on this earth. Not only do you share your life and your love with your children in a unique kind of way, but you are responsible for their spiritual training. Just think about it for a moment. Whenever you helped to give your children life, you became partly responsible for a soul that will exist throughout eternity!

Thus, there are both physical and spiritual responsibilities involved in raising children. Physically, they will need to be trained in all of the ways that will be useful for them in living life on this earth. Spiritually, they will need to be trained to have such a strong faith in God that they will make the decision to follow Him when they are older.

Think back over the things we discussed in lesson 6, regarding God's blueprint for children to become wise by listening to their parents. This is what God wants children to do. Now, as we focus on parenting, we must recognize how successful Satan will be with our children if he can get the parents to train their children in ways that are not according to God's wisdom! Just think about what will happen to children who are fulfilling their God-given responsibility to learn from and obey their parents if

their parents are leading them on a path that results in physical harm and/or spiritual destruction!

Sadly, Satan is having great success in destroying the next generation from the very earliest points in their lives by setting a foundation for them that they will often not overcome. So, as parents who are interested in following God, we must follow His blueprint for how to raise children who will walk according to God's wisdom – physically and spiritually. Fortunately, although God has *not* spelled out what we should do in every situation we encounter, He has provided us a blueprint to follow and apply to the various situations we face as parents.

Train Up A Child

If there is one verse in the Bible that properly sums up the responsibility parents have, it is Proverbs 22:6. "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." Let's spend some time, then, considering this verse and its various components.

Train up a child

Let's begin at the most basic point regarding this passage: A child must be trained. Recall that foolishness is in the heart of a child prior to training. For instance, Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him." Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

Children are not born into this world knowing all that they need to know about living on this earth. Instead, from the time they are born, every day is about learning something new that will be used in their lives. Early on, they learn how to complete the simplest of tasks: Keeping their eyes open, eating, sitting up, standing up, crawling, walking, running, using the bathroom, etc. But, as they grow, they learn about things that will impact what they recognize to be right and wrong and face decisions of great consequence to their future.

As children grow and make decisions, then, one of two things will happen. Either the children will bring delight to their parents or they will bring grief. Some children bring their godly parents delight because the training they have received results in the children using wisdom in making decisions and choosing to follow the Lord. Their parents experience a sense of pride when watching their children make wise and well-informed decisions, when their children grow spiritually and accomplish work in the kingdom of God, and when their children pass along their wisdom to their own children. Proverbs 10:1 says, “The proverbs of Solomon: A wise son makes a glad father, But a foolish son is the grief of his mother.” Proverbs 29:17 says, “Correct your son, and he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul.”

Yet, some children bring their godly parents grief and sorrow because they continue to make foolish decisions that harm themselves, harm others, and fail to please God. Their parents always seem to have to make excuses for their children’s actions, take the blame for what their children have done, or privately weep and worry when considering what they have done wrong in raising their children. Proverbs 17:25 says, “A foolish son is a grief to his father, And bitterness to her who bore him.” Proverbs 19:13 says, “A foolish son is the ruin of his father, And the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping.”

Although every child does possess free will and can make his/her own choices in life, there is much in whether a child brings delight or grief that is the result of the training received. For, the wisdom (or lack thereof) parents have used in raising their children will be on display for everyone to see whenever the children have grown. Jesus said, “But wisdom is justified by all her children” (Luke 7:35). While Jesus was not speaking specifically about parents and children, I believe the principle is applicable. The results/fruit of what we do go a long way to demonstrate the wisdom (or lack thereof) that was used.

In the way he should go

All parents are training their children in *some* way. Even parents who neglect and abuse their

children are training them. They just are not training them in a way that will be beneficial for their children. And, given the responsibility of children to learn from their parents, there are great consequences to this foolishness in training.

Since all training is not equally valuable and helpful to children, this implies that there must be time and effort shown in order to train in the right way. Remember that Proverbs 22:6 says to train up a child “in the way he should go.” That does not happen by accident. That does not happen by parents getting so caught up in the busyness of life, in working overtime to give their children everything they want, in running to and from ballgames, choir, concerts, etc., in leaving their children in the care of another while they work or spend time with friends, in letting the television, video games, the internet, social media, etc. occupy their children’s time, etc. Instead, training children in the way they should go is a very proactive responsibility that requires parents sacrifice in order to provide such training.

Think about what parents may need to sacrifice in order to train their children in the way they should go. Maybe they need to live in a smaller and cheaper house with less expensive vehicles and fewer toys so that mom does not “have” to work outside of the home and so that dad can actually be home with and lead his family properly. Maybe parents and children all need to turn off the television, phones, video games, computers, and other electronic devices so that they can focus on strengthening relationships and studying God’s word together. Maybe parents will not be able to keep up the kind of social lives that they may have had in high school, college, or in their pre-children days in order to be around their children rather than their friends. Maybe parents will have to limit the number of activities their children are involved in so that their training time is not spent in so much chaos running to and from all of the different activities and they can spend time as a family doing what really matters (i.e. serving God, studying the Bible, attending the assemblies of the local church, etc.). Maybe parents will have to sacrifice worldly standards of success for their children (i.e. having the best athlete, the best student, the president of the student body, most popular in the class, etc.) in order to focus on God’s

standards of success for their children. While these are just a few examples, parents will surely need to make sacrifices in order to complete the appropriate training.

Then, parents must recognize that the way their children should go involves both physical and spiritual components. Consider some physical elements to the training parents must provide for their children. They should teach their children personal hygiene (i.e. how to wash their hands, how to brush their teeth, how to bathe, how to dress themselves, etc.). They must teach their children to obey them (i.e. especially when they instruct their children to do things that their children don't want to do). They should teach their children regarding the secular knowledge they will need (i.e. the alphabet, mathematical skills, etc.). They must teach their children that decisions have consequences (and let them experience the consequences of their decisions). They must teach their children respect for authority (i.e. respect for their parents, teachers, law enforcement officers, elders, etc.). They must teach their children how to manage their resources well (i.e. their time and money). They must teach their children how to work (rather than having everything given to them). This is just a sample of some physical things that parents should be training their children in.

But, even more important than the physical training is the spiritual training that parents must provide for their children. This spiritual training includes such things as believing that God exists and is the Creator of all things, believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, trusting in the Bible as the inspired word of God that will judge us all, living according to the standard of right and wrong God has revealed in the pages of the Bible, loving God with all their lives, the dangers of sin, the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, the church that Jesus Christ has established, how to establish Bible authority, how to live holy and pure lives in Christ Jesus, how to serve others, the importance of teaching the gospel of Christ to the lost, denying self of physical pleasures and treasures whenever they are contrary to God's will, how to be good stewards, how to answer objections to the faith revealed in the Bible, what God requires of all the members of the home, how to

choose godly friends, how to endure the trials of life, etc.

Following the Bible in training your children will cause success for both yourself and your children. Joshua 1:8 records Joshua speaking to the Israelites about following the Law of Moses that had been given by God. "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Unfortunately, there are many parents who train their children in physical ways that are beneficial to their children, but neglect the spiritual training that is so crucial. Remember, parents are partly responsible for their child's spiritual life that will continue through eternity. Surely, they should want nothing more for their child than to train him/her in a way that will result in eternal life in Heaven!

Listen to Deuteronomy 6:4-9. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

This spiritual training should be interwoven in every area of life. There should be regular spiritual conversation at the dinner table, as you travel in the vehicle, as you walk together, as you see opportunities for lessons in faith and living for God, etc. There should be constant reminders of God's laws in the home. God's law should always be given the important place that it deserves in the home – in study, in discussion, in application, etc.

This is so crucial to the spiritual wellbeing of children (even the very young) because "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). We should never expect our

children to develop true saving faith that will cause them to *choose* to obey God if we do not teach them the word of God that develops that kind of faith while they are young. This kind of training is more valuable than all of the physical training that enables them to be good students, get good jobs, be good athletes, etc.!

God's blueprint (ideally) involves both father and mother working to train their children in these spiritual ways. Fathers, remember, are commanded: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). And, recall that Timothy's mother passed her faith on to him by teaching him the Scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 1:5 and 2 Timothy 3:15).

When he is old he will not depart from it

Now, here is the hope of all the training that is done while the children are at home. Proverbs 22:6 says to train up a child in the way he should go and "when he is old he will not depart from it." We must recognize the great encouragement that is being offered to Christian parents in this verse, while we also exercise care not to make conclusions that are not supported by the text.

We must remember that the book of Proverbs reveals wisdom from God. But, there are many generalizations that are made in the book that do have exceptions. This Proverb is no different. So, as you consider the general truth, you should recognize that parents who do their job right in training their children will often see their children grow up and decide to follow that same path in life and pass it on to their children later.

In fact, this can even be seen with parents who were *not* Christians. There are many similarities that can be observed between parents and children. Children will often follow in their parents' footsteps (knowingly or unknowingly) because it is what is most familiar to them. Parents who are involved with alcohol, drugs, promiscuous sex, etc. often see their children do the same. Parents who don't work hard often raise lazy children. Parents who don't handle money God's ways often have children who don't handle money God's ways.

The reverse is also often true. Parents who are diligent in taking their children to church services often see their children take their children to church services. Parents who have a God-structured home with high morals often see their children pursue God-structured homes and live according to those same standards of morality identified in the Bible. Parents who work hard and serve other people often see their children work hard and serve others.

So, training makes a difference and has a lasting impact on children. But, there *are* exceptions and parents need to recognize that even though they do their jobs their children still possess free will and may choose not to follow their parents' training. For instance, Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

I mentioned that the Proverbs contain many generalizations that do have exceptions. Consider an example (though many could be provided). Proverbs 10:27 says, "The fear of the Lord prolongs days, But the years of the wicked will be shortened." This is often true. Living according to God's ways often results in longevity of life compared to those who live wickedly. But, this is not a guarantee. Instead, there are many righteous people who die young (think about Jesus and Stephen) and wicked people who live long lives.

Then, if Proverbs 22:6 was a guarantee, what could be said about children who were *not* trained in the ways of the Lord? Would they be destined to follow their parents' sinful ways with no choice in the matter? Of course not! King Hezekiah is an interesting study to see both points (read 2 Kings 16-21). Hezekiah did what was right in the sight of God. Yet, both his father (King Ahaz) and his son (King Manasseh) did not.

Furthermore, consider God as the perfect example of a Father. He leads all of His children in the right ways all of the time, through His perfect example, perfect teaching, and perfect discipline. Yet, even He has prodigal children who choose not to listen to Him (see Luke 15:11-32). So, while

parents should absolutely strive to train their children in the ways their children ought to go and take comfort in the fact that this training often results in children who follow it when they are older, there are exceptions. Therefore, parents must be committed to simply doing the best job they can to train their children in the way they should go and pray that they will not depart from it when they are older.

Train Up A Child By Example

I believe that whenever we break down the concept of training our children, we find three elements. The first of these three elements is the example that is set by parents. You have likely heard it said that “actions speak louder than words.” All of the other training done by parents is of little value if their children *see* an example in their parents that contradict what their parents are *saying*.

“Like father, like son”

We can use our sense of observation and recognize that children are often similar to their parents, for the good or the bad. Even in “little things” (which often are not so little) like personal demeanor, people can recognize similarities between parents and children. The phrases, “like father, like son” and “like mother, like daughter” have been coined to express this reality.

Actually, this is a concept that is presented in the Scriptures. Ezekiel 16:44 says, “Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use this proverb against you: ‘Like mother, like daughter.’” This can also be demonstrated throughout the Scriptures. For instance, while there are few exceptions (i.e. King Hezekiah), consider the examples of the kings of Israel and Judah. Example after example talks about how sons followed in the steps of their fathers. For instance, 2 Kings 15:9 speaks of Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, reigning over Israel. This king “did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done; and he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin.”

Parents shepherd their children

Parents must carefully consider the example they are setting for their children. They must recognize that their children are watching. Consider your demeanor, the way you talk, the decisions that you make, the morality you demonstrate, your priorities, your faith, etc. Your children are watching you – if only to try and catch you in a moment of hypocrisy! Don’t let them down by showing them an example that would not be pleasing to God!

You see, parents are like shepherds for their children. This is especially true about the father, but is true to a lesser degree for a mother. For instance, in 1 Timothy 3:4-5, concerning the qualifications for elders/shepherds in a local church, the apostle Paul said he must be “one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?).” So, fathers ought to shepherd their children.

Part of the work of shepherding involves leading the way for the sheep. Shepherds do not just command their sheep; they lead them (just as God leads us, see Psalm 23). This means that fathers (as well as mothers) need to lead their children by example in showing them the way their children ought to go. In fact, children often learn best by *seeing* rather than just being *told*. You have probably heard the phrase, “A picture is worth 1,000 words.” Just imagine, then, what an entire childhood of *seeing* strong examples of faithful living is worth to your children! But, in contrast, imagine what an entire childhood of *seeing* weak or inconsistent examples of godly living does to your children!

The “light” of parents must be strong

Children are often excellent at spotting hypocrisy. For, their foolishness wants some way to justify their desires. So, if mom and dad are not living consistently faithful lives, they should not be surprised to see their children use their failings to justify their own ungodly activity later! The fact is that Christian parents must be committed to letting their lights shine as bright as they can while they are in the home – not just while they are around their Christian brethren or out in the world!

Jesus taught the value of a godly example in Matthew 5:13-16. “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Peter taught the same thing concerning Christian wives toward their unbelieving husbands in 1 Peter 3:1-2. “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.”

Therefore, Christian parents must never allow their lights to go out in the home. Instead, they should live their lives in such a way that will cause their children to consider their faith and glorify God! Yes, Christian parents can win their children to the Lord (in large part) due to the example that is set. But, they can also drive their children away from the Lord by showing them an example of hypocrisy! And, Jesus warns that we must never cause a child to stumble. He said, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Train Up A Child By Instruction

Here is a second component of training up your children. Training requires instruction. As good as your example may be, you will have to supplement your example with the proper instruction. Even Jesus (while setting the perfect example for everyone who saw Him) had to teach people how to live. So, parents must love their children enough to instruct them in the proper ways – especially pertaining to the spiritual things of life.

Instruction takes knowledge

Parents must recognize that they cannot teach what they do not know. So, if you recognize the need to instruct your children in the ways of the Lord (as found in the pages of the Bible), you will never be able to do that effectively without first knowing what God’s word teaches. Recall from Deuteronomy 6, for instance, that before the Israelites could teach the laws of God diligently to their children, they were first instructed to “hear...and be careful to observe” them (verse 3). Then, verse 6 says, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.”

The same is true today. You must be diligently to study and understand God’s word before you are capable of passing on what you know. Unfortunately, many who are at this stage of their lives when they ought to be teachers still have need for others to teach them the basics of God’s word (Hebrews 5:12-14). Yet, if this is the case, make it a primary goal to go and get knowledge of God’s word by being diligent to study it every single day (Acts 17:11 and 2 Timothy 2:15)! Turn off the TV, put down the phone, shut off the computer, stop going out with your friends.... Do whatever you must do to get this knowledge so you can pass it on to your children. For, God has said that His people are destroyed “for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6)!

Instruction takes time

Children will not learn what you know about God and His word by just being around you (though they ought to learn some through your example). Instead, it will take your commitment to teaching them what they need to know. So, you should look for any and every opportunity to instruct your children in the way they should go.

Remember that Deuteronomy 6 speaks of teaching your children when you “sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (verse 7). So, just having a nightly or weekly Bible study *is not enough!* This must be a constant commitment to taking whatever opportunities you have to instruct in the ways of the Lord! Paul spoke of “redeeming the time” regarding people who needed to learn the gospel (Colossians 4:5-6).

Instruction takes patience

It would be nice if the people we tried to teach would understand and obey what we teach them the first time, every time. But, it does not happen. And, it won't happen with your children either. The fact is that helping people learn the truths in God's word is often a long process. Truths (even basic truths) will often need to be repeated over and over again!

Therefore, it is essential that you show patience in your teaching! Certainly, you do not want your children to feel as though they are incapable of learning God's word and that you are quick to abandon them in your instruction! The apostle Paul taught, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2). Surely, this has some application in the home as well as outside of it!

Instruction takes wisdom

The way that you teach the truth of the gospel matters. Jesus instructed His apostles, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). The apostle Paul said that the truth must be spoken "in love" (Ephesians 4:15). He also said, "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:5-6).

You should pray for wisdom (James 1:5), as applicable to teaching your children. You will need wisdom from God in knowing what you need to teach to your children and when you should teach it. You will need wisdom to know how much to push and at what times. You will need wisdom in relating Bible truths to the lives of your children and making the appropriate applications.

Train Up A Child By Discipline

A third element of training is discipline. Now, I have arranged these three in the order that I believe to be the most appropriate and effective. A

godly example is necessary in order for instruction to be the most effective. And, instruction is necessary before discipline should be taken. And, discipline is essential to correct the improper behavior of our children.

No discipline is a failure

Perhaps you have either said or heard parents say, "I love my children too much to spank them" (or discipline them in some other way). Yet, God says that if you do not properly discipline your children (which includes spanking), you hate your children! In fact, it has been said that the worst form of child abuse happens when parents do not discipline their children appropriately. And, there is a lot of truth in that statement.

Listen to the vast array of Scriptures that speak on this subject. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly." Proverbs 19:18 says, "Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction." Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him." Proverbs 23:13-14 says, "Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell." Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother." Proverbs 29:17 says, "Correct your son, and he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul." Study each of these passages carefully and diligently and do not be like Eli, who did not restrain his sons (1 Samuel 3:13)!

Too much discipline is a failure

While failing to exercise discipline is clearly not the way of wise parenting, too much discipline is also a failure. It is sad to see parents who abuse their own children through excessive discipline (or in any way). Surely this leaves scars on the child that will not be easily repaired. Then, there are also parents who verbally abuse their children through yelling and screaming at them out of personal anger, speaking out of frustration, saying things that should never be said (and can never be taken back), and break the spirits of their children. Sometimes, the

discipline that is used does not “fit the crime” that was committed and pushes their children away rather than accomplishing the good it was meant to accomplish.

Listen to Paul’s instructions to fathers in Ephesians and Colossians. Ephesians 6:4 says, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Colossians 3:21 says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Therefore, God warns fathers (in particular) not to push their children so much that they push them into rebellion, break their spirits, and cause unnecessary irritation.

Proper balance must be achieved

Both of these extremes must be avoided whenever parents discipline their children. These can do great harm to their children physically, emotionally, and spiritually. So, parents must pray for and use wisdom regarding the proper way to discipline their children.

I believe that God is the perfect example of disciplining His children. Read Hebrews 12:3-11 about the way in which God’s chastens His children. Notice carefully that the purpose of the chastening is to yield “the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (verse 11). So, parents must recognize that discipline is not a way to get out your own frustrations or disappointments. Instead, it is a way to show your children love and help them live better in the future by correcting the mistakes that have been made.

But, like God, you must make sure that you truly understand all the facts and not execute judgment too hastily. You also must be willing to use the “rod” of correction. Yes, Christian parents should believe in spanking their children. Though it does not have to be used in every situation, it ought to be used regularly as part of your children’s training.

Then, Christian parents must also recognize that God requires them to exercise discipline regarding their children who have grown, become Christians, and gone back into sin. Carefully read Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, and 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15. In fact, this discipline is

often most effective whenever it is carried out by parents and should work to pull the child back to Jesus Christ for the saving of his/her soul! Parents must not allow their physical relationships with their children to be more important than saving their souls from eternal torment!

Conclusion

Parents have a responsibility toward their children to train them in the way they should go. It is a great failure for a parent to help give his/her child physical and spiritual life and then not properly, carefully, and lovingly lead, instruct, and discipline that child! Although the job of parenting has many difficulties and is a great responsibility, it is a most rewarding work when it is done according to God’s blueprint!

Study Questions

How is Satan trying to destroy the next generation by getting parents to fail in their responsibilities?

1. Train Up A Child

Why must children be trained?

In what way must parents train their children? Give some specific examples.

What will often be the result of this kind of training? Is this a guarantee?

2. Train Up A Child By Example

How do children often follow the example of their parents?

How are parents like shepherds of their children (especially fathers)?

Explain how parents must let their lights shine for their children.

3. Train Up A Child By Instruction

Why does instruction take knowledge?

How does instruction take time?

How does instruction take patience?

How does instruction take wisdom?

4. Train Up A Child By Discipline

How is exercising no discipline a failure?

How is exercising too much discipline a failure?

How can proper balance be achieved?