

Passing Spiritual Values to Children

A Study of Bible Parents & Caregivers

by Lotte Rechter
Children's Ministries Director
Danish Union of Churches
Trans-European Division

This single-session parenting seminar addresses the important issue of passing spiritual values to children by posing the question, "Who was responsible for teaching the children spiritual values in biblical times?" The program provides an opportunity to study the Scripture accounts of several parents/caregivers and the children/youth in their households: Abraham, Moses, Mordecai, Mary, Lois and Eunice and to reflect on the biblical principles thus discovered in making practical decisions for families today.

Participants will focus on the central role of the home in passing on authentic spiritual values, have a clearer understanding of their own responsibility with their children, and feel committed to undertaking this high calling to transmit the heritage of faith to the next generation.

Part A

Bible Study - Bible Parents and Caregivers

Handouts/PowerPoints. [*Prepare handouts with the Bible characters, texts and questions for participants. Alternatively, you could put the texts and questions on PowerPoint slides.*]

Small group assignment #1. [*Make small groups of approximately 8 people. Invite them to read the Bible texts and discuss the attached questions for each Bible household of parents/caregivers and children. Set a time limit of approximately 20 minutes. You may decide to assign each group the whole list of Bible characters and questions or you might divide the characters and questions among several groups.*]

Abraham

- What was the significance of Abraham's construction of an altar in Bethel? (Gen. 12:8)
- Why was this important here and elsewhere o Abraham? To his household? To the community? (Gen. 12:7; 13:18)
- How do you think Abraham's spiritual values influenced the development of his son Isaac's spiritual values? (Gen. 26:24-25)

Moses

- How did the faith of Moses' parents influence his life? (Heb. 11:23-27; Deut. 34:10-12)

- Why do you think parents are so important in the counsel of Moses about passing on spiritual values? (Deut. 6:4-9)
- What does Moses envision as the responsibility of parents?

Mordecai

- Why did Mordecai encourage Esther to join the beauty-contest? (Esther 2:5-11)
- Where did Esther go for spiritual guidance? (Esther 4)

Mary

- What do you think Mary did to help Jesus grow spiritually? (Luke 2:52: cf. Matt. 4:4-10)

Lois and Eunice

- Who were these women and what influence did they have on Timothy? (2 Tim. 3:14-17)
- Why do you think the apostle Paul called attention to the home life of Timothy?

Part B

Reflection – Passing on our Spiritual Heritage

Handouts/PowerPoints. [*Prepare handouts with the discussion questions for each participant or put the questions on PowerPoint slides.*]

Small group assignment #2. [*Against the backdrop of their Bible study of parents/caregivers and their children/youth, invite the groups to continue with the second assignment of the session—to discuss the following question, bearing in mind their children and the church's children. Allow approximately 15 minutes for this discussion. Groups will be asked to present their main ideas and conclusions to the whole group.*]

Discussion questions.

- What is it we want to pass on to our children?
- What values are important to impress on them?
- Why do we want to do it?
- How can we do it the best way?
- Why can we not pass on to them something we do not have ourselves?

Reporting. [*Allow each group 3-4 minutes to present their main ideas and conclusions to the whole group.*]

Summary. [*Affirm the groups for their work together. Briefly summarize the main points and principles you and the participants have discerned in the study of the Bible characters and their approach to passing on their spiritual values to their children.*]

End with a short appeal for the parents and the church to take seriously the responsibility of being spiritual guides for the children. Share God's promises to supply all their needs in Christ Jesus and to never leave them nor forsake them in their crucial task. Read the following Bible promise from Isa. 55:10-11.]

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Closing. *[End with a prayer (even better—let the groups pray together) for the parents and their children.]*