

# Letters to Parents. No. 6.

by Charles Finney

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*Charles Finney emphasizes the importance of parental responsibility, education, and faith in training children and warns against the dangers of recklessness, loose neighborhoods, and a lack of firmness.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6:6, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4

**Topics:** "Parenting", "Responsibility in Family"

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## Description

Charles Finney addresses the challenges parents face in raising their children, emphasizing the lack of education and awareness among mothers and fathers regarding their responsibilities. He highlights the importance of parental unity and the detrimental effects of societal influences on children's upbringing. Finney warns against the recklessness and lack of firmness in parenting, urging parents to take their roles seriously and to cultivate a deep sense of responsibility for their children's moral and spiritual development. He also points out the negative impact of unhealthy habits and the need for parents to rely on their faith and the promises of the Bible in guiding their children.

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## Transcript

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS:--

I will now call your attention--

IV. To some of the difficulties in the way of training up children in the way they should go.

1. A want of the requisite information on the part of parents, and especially on the part of mothers, to whose care and management they are principally committed. Thus far, as a general fact, female education has been so much neglected, that but few women have the requisite information of the proper training of children. There is a most sad deficiency in this respect, in the training of young women, in reference to their being future mothers. Why, the education of daughters is one of the most important things in the world. That women should be educated, is wholly indispensable to the salvation of the world. An enlightened and sanctified generation of mothers would exert the greatest influence upon future generations, that ever was exerted upon human beings. It is one of "guilt's blunders," to educate the sons, and suffer the daughters to go with little or no education.

2. Another difficulty is, the want, often, of education, and still more frequently of consideration, on the part of fathers. Most fathers seem to be so much engaged in business, politics, or amusements, as to leave

very little time for deep consideration in respect to their responsibility and influence with their children. This is all wrong; for if there be any thing that demands the attention and time of the father, it is those things that concern the well-being of his children. If he neglect his own household, whatever else he does, he virtually "denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

3. A want of a sense of responsibility in both parents, often prevents their training up their children in the way they should go. Without a keen and efficient sense of responsibility, parents will never do their duty to their children, however much they may love them.

4. A want of agreement between the parents, in regard to training their children. If the parents do not agree upon the course to be pursued--if they do not lend to each other the whole weight of their influence, children will soon see it, and parental influence will soon lose its power over them.

5. The ruinous notions that are prevalent among parents, in regard to training up children. Many parents have given themselves so little to consideration upon this subject, as that their opinions are little more than dreams, and old wives' fables, upon the subject of training children.

6. There is often a great difficulty, on account of the loose notions and habits of neighborhoods in regard to their children. If a parent who is anxious to preserve the morals of his children, makes up his mind to keep them at home, it is often unjustly thought and said, that it is because he thinks his children better than the neighbors' children. Or, if he keeps his children at home, the neighbors' children are suffered to come in throngs to visit them. In this case they must be sent home, at which their parents are often offended, or suffered to remain, at the hazard of all those evils that arise from suffering children to mingle together without restraint. Or, to avoid this, the time of the father or mother, or of some adult member of the family, must be given up to superintend and accompany them in their plays. It should be always understood by parents, that they have no right to suffer their children to go to a neighbor's house, to play with his children, without first obtaining the consent of the parents of such children. And, if they do, they ought to be willing to have them sent home, at the discretion of those whose children they visit. Certainly no man has a right to inflict on me or my family the visit of his children, without my knowledge or consent. Nor have I any right to do so with him. And I had much rather a neighbor would turn his horse into my yard to feed, without my consent, than to turn his children into my yard to play with my children, without my consent. I say much rather. I might say, almost infinitely rather, as the horse would only devour the feed; but who can calculate the evil that may result from one hour's unrestrained and unobserved intercourse of children with each other.

7. Another great evil is the recklessness of parents, in respect to training their children. Many parents seem to turn their children to and fro, to wander like a wild ass' colt. If so be they are out of the way, it matters little with some parents, where or in what company they are. Now if there is any thing in the universe that deserves the severest reprehension, and I must add, the deepest damnation, it is such a reckless spirit in parents. It is tempting God. No language can describe its guilt.

8. A great want of firmness on the part of parents, in training their children, is another great evil. Firmness may respect:

(1.) The government and discipline of their children.

(2.) Guarding them against evil influences from abroad.

(3.) Resisting those habits of society that would subject their children to that kind and degree of contact with other children, which will positively ruin them.

(4.) It may respect those fashions, in regard to dress and many other things, that tend to carry their children away from God.

9. Another difficulty in the way is a want of faith and deep piety in parents. Many parents seem to have no practical confidence in the promises of the Bible, in respect to their children. They have very little piety; and many of them seem not to know that there are such multitudes of exceeding great and precious promises upon which they may rely.

10. Another difficulty is, a want of a sense of responsibility to the neighborhood, in parents. An ill managed family is the greatest nuisance that can infest any neighborhood. No man has a right to neglect the proper training of his children, and thereby render them a pest to society, any more than he has a right to build a mill dam, that will flood a timbered country, and thereby destroy the lives of the people. Now the former is an infinitely more aggravated sin than the latter. And if a man deserves to be indicted for building such a mill dam, as is often the case, how much more does he deserve to be indicted for a common nuisance, in suffering an uninstructed and unmanaged family to pour their abominations over the neighboring children. Such a family ought to be regarded as a public nuisance. Such fathers and mothers ought to be labored with, advised, admonished, and if need be, rebuked, and even indicted. And the influence of such families should be as strictly and religiously guarded against as we would guard against the influence of the devil.

11. Another great difficulty is, the influence of the flesh in the present state of the human constitution. The bodies of infants generally come into the world saturated with tea, coffee, and often with alcohol. They are born of mothers who have lived on the most stimulating kinds of diet, and from their very birth, nurtured upon whatever is calculated to pamper their appetites and rasp their nervous system into a state of the utmost excitement. This promotes a precocious development of all their organs, and gives great power to their animal propensities. It is almost sure to deliver them over, at a very early age, to the dominion of appetite and lust.

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,

C.G.FINNEY

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