

# 20. Children a Dwelling Place for God

by Denny Kenaston

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*Children are a dwelling place for God, and parents have a crucial role in guiding them towards salvation by protecting their minds, teaching their wills to submit to God, and guiding their emotions.*

**Duration:** 45:50

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6:6, Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21

**Topics:** "Child Rearing", "Discipleship"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of raising children as vessels for the living God, focusing on nurturing their minds, wills, emotions, and bodies to prepare them for God's dwelling. It highlights the significance of guiding children in the right path, filling their minds with the Word of God, training their wills to yield, directing their emotions towards love for God, and disciplining their bodies to be in subjection. The ultimate goal is to raise children who, when converted, can walk with God, listen to His voice, and live as solid disciples of Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

Alright, this evening, this evening's session, these last two are the last two of the practical how-tos of training children. This first message, I want to entitle it, Children, a Dwelling Place for the Living God. That's quite an awesome statement when you think about a title like that.

There are many other aspects of a godly home, which we want to look at. But this evening, we want to ponder a bit, Children, a Dwelling Place for the Living God. Reading in 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 16, God says these words to us, Ye are the temple of the living God, as God has said.

I will dwell in them and walk in them. I will be their God and they shall be my people. 1st Corinthians chapter 6 says these words to us in verse 19, What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.

Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. And then also, in 1st Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23, we find these words, And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, or through and through and through, as Brother Keith would say. And I pray God, your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless under the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Tonight, I want us to get a glimpse behind the reasons why all this training is so important. God says of himself, I dwell in eternity. God says of himself, heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

Think about it, parents. The everlasting God has given us a child, a vessel to prepare for his dwelling place. That is no little responsibility.

I don't know if we can grasp the depths of those words, even if we spend hours meditating upon it, as you hold a little child in your hand and you realize that God made this child and that God wants you to prepare this child as a dwelling place for the living God. That is awesome to me. That is awesome to me.

In the beginning, God made man in his image. He was a beautiful creation. God's crowning masterpiece without a doubt.

Man made in God's image. He made him a little lower than the angels. I place this diagram on the board this evening to represent man as a tri-part being.

Many of you are familiar with this diagram. I don't need to spend a lot of time explaining it. But God made man in the beginning a tri-part being.

He gave him a body. The Bible says he formed man out of the dust of the earth. And then it says that God breathed into man his very breath.

And man became a living soul. So here we have the outside border here representing man's physical body. This is where man can relate to the physical world.

He sees, he hears, he touches, he works, etc. God also gave man a soul. That's represented by this second area in here.

The soul is made up of the mind, the will, and the emotions. Man's mind to think and reason with. Man's will to choose with.

We've spoken a lot about that already. And man's emotions. Where he feels in his heart and he loves and where he sets his affections on.

God also made man with a spirit. The spirit of man is the center of man's being. Here we have the ability to fellowship with God.

It is here where God has chosen to dwell. Right in here. In the beginning, man functioned beautifully as God had made him.

He was a God-centered being in the beginning. His spirit was alive and filled and controlled by God's spirit. His soul, mind, will, and emotion were in subjection to God.

Who ruled man in the center of his being by his spirit. And man's body was controlled by God through his spirit. He was a beautiful, God-centered, God-controlled man in the beginning.

Awesome. When man fell in the garden, the Bible says he died. God was very specific with Adam.

He told him, in the day ye eat thereof, thou shalt surely die. That's what God said. In the day that ye eat thereof, thou shalt surely die.

Now we know that when Adam and Eve ate that fruit in the Garden of Eden. After they took that bite, they were still alive physically. They could walk around.

They moved around in the garden. They were still the same in their soul. They had a mind to think with, etc., etc.

All of those things were there. But something was different. Something changed when they disobeyed God's authority.

And what I want to propose to you is, that in the center of man's being is where man died. In the very day that man ate that fruit in disobedience to God. He was cut off from God in his spirit.

And that is the way it is with every one of us that is born into the world. We are born after Adam, our father. And we are born in this world, a tri-part being.

But our spirit is dead to God. It is cut off. We cannot have fellowship with God.

We get mixed up in all kinds of confusions. Because we are cut off in our hearts from God. Now remember the nature of saving grace.

And the clear example that we gave of a conversion at the beginning of this series. There in Ezekiel chapter 36 where God says, I am going to take the stony heart out of you. And I am going to put a new heart in you.

And when I put a new heart in you, I am going to put my spirit in that new heart. And that's exactly what conversion is all about. God gives us a new heart and then he fills that new heart with his spirit.

That's regeneration. Amen? We all believe that? That's real clear to us all. This is the condition of unregenerate man.

This is how our children come to us. Just like I had described up there. A spirit that is cut off from God.

This is how our children come to us. It's very important that we understand the depth of what that means as parents who are called upon to raise our children. Now consider with me, just for a moment, the disciples.

When Jesus called the disciples to come and follow him, they were like this diagram before I put the red marks in the center of it. They were alive, yet they were cut off from God in their spirits. They had not been regenerated yet.

They were still very man-centered beings. Many of the things that you read in the gospels, it shocks you. You think, how could these guys be like this? They've been with Jesus for three and a half years.

Except that there was something missing on the inside of them. There was something missing. I would like for you just to consider a bit this evening that when Jesus took those disciples and began to train them, they were very much just like our children are when God gives them to us.

There's something wrong on the inside. Here they came to Jesus. They had probably been raised in one of those good homes we talked about the other evening, one of those good Jewish homes.

They knew the law. They had lots of the Bible up here in their head. They had all kinds of things right.

They were following the commandments the best they knew how. The soul was in its place and all those things. When Jesus said to them, follow me, they did leave their nets and they went and followed Jesus.

All those things, the will was in its place. It was wanting to go after Jesus. But yet, in spite of all the teaching, in spite of all the example, in spite of all the miracles that they saw Jesus do, they were still very man-centered creatures, weren't they? I wonder who's going to be the greatest around you, they said.

Can I be? No, I want to be. Can I be? No, not you, me. All the time, they were very much man-centered beings.

But when the day of Pentecost was fully come, all of a sudden, God came into those men in the center of their being, and all of a sudden, everything fell into place. All their education, all their training, all their years of schooling, all their mom and dads taught them from the word of God, all the examples of Jesus, all the words that he said to them, boom, all of a sudden, everything fell into place. And they were changed into another man by the Holy Ghost.

The glory of God filled the temple and everything else fell into its place. When God came to dwell in them and empower them, what a transformation, what an awesome group of men they were after that. Now, I don't know if you understand that, but this is how our children come to us.

They come to us, they come to us totally open. They come to us with no past. They come to us with not a bunch of terrible things that have happened to them, but they come to us without being regenerated in their inner man.

That's how each child comes to us. The spirit is dead to God, and God is not inside of them. But I think it's important for us parents to recognize where God is going with our children, so that we can go the way that God is going.

Because, you see, God's goal is to dwell in our children someday. What is He after? What does He want to do with each one of our children? He wants to come and possess them. He wants to come and dwell in them.

He wants to come and control them. He wants to come and rule over every part of them. He wants to come and pick them up and use them for His honor and for His glory.

He wants a disciple that is filled with His presence and yielded to His will, and willing to obey the promptings of His Spirit. That's what God is after. Oh, this is very important and good for us to know as parents.

A child comes to us, a very self-centered being. I'm sure we can all agree with that. But I want you to consider this this evening.

They come to us totally blank. This body has not been turned loose yet. It has not been defiled yet.

The mind, the will, and the emotion, they have not been left to themselves yet. They are blank. Oh, the beauty of a newborn child.

Amen? You ever consider before? What makes a baby so beautiful? You know? Did you ever think about it? It's not just that they have pink rosy cheeks, brothers and sisters. The reason they look so beautiful is because they are pure and innocent. There's no junk in them yet.

Even though their spirit is cut off from God, and there's no way that they can have fellowship with God, the soul and the body has not been defiled yet, and there shines out of that newborn baby innocence and purity and openness. And you look at it and say, So beautiful. This baby is so beautiful.

It's because God gave you a blank sheet of paper. Let me ask you a question. If you take that child and put it in the wrong environment, and leave it there, and leave it to itself for five years, what do you think is going to happen with all of this openness that this child has? Put it there in the midst of anger, lust, gluttony, televisions, evil spirits, conflict, hatred, pornography, drugs, drinking, and stealing, and in five years, what will you have? How ruined? How defiled? How ungodly? In just five years.

But I want you to also consider this. If you take that child and you put it in a right environment, with all of its openness, and that's the way they are, I mean, the child is just like this. And you can see it on their face.

The expression of their heart is seen on their face. Just like this. Just wide open.

If you put them in the right environment, in the midst of love and kindness, purity, a beautiful church, a Bible, the Holy Spirit filled home, a discipline, and an oversight in its life, in five years, you will see what a different kind of child you have, even though nothing has changed in here yet. Nothing has changed in here. We're still dealing with the soul and the body of this child.

Nothing has changed in here. They're only five years old. Oh, parents, I hope that you are awake this evening, and can grasp the reality of what we're looking at here.

What a benefit! What a heritage! What a blessing and a favor we give to our children when we recognize that someday God is going to dwell inside of my child. And everything in this child's soul and everything of this child's body is going to be demanded to be brought in order and under the subjection of the living God who comes to dwell within them. What a favor we do our children if we watch over this area of their life.

Though their spirit has not been regenerated yet, if we watch over this area of their life, what a favor we do to our children. If we watch over this area called their body and keep it from becoming defiled, what a favor we do to our children when the day comes, praise God, when they yield their heart and life to God, and in He comes, regeneration takes place, and the Spirit of God comes to dwell inside of that being, all of a sudden, everything begins to fall in place. But also, consider this, such a heavy burden we put upon our children if we neglect to do that all their days, if we let them unto themselves and their soul begins to develop all kinds of wrong attitudes and patterns and we allow their body to become defiled and rebellious and demanding and all those things, what a heavy burden we put upon them.

Yes, it's true, my dear parents, salvation will come, the Spirit of God will come and dwell inside of that child someday, but look at all the things they're going to have to work through. What a heavy burden that is for us as parents to leave the child to themselves and say, well, someday, someday, praise God, they're going to get converted. Yes, someday, praise God, they may get converted.

But when we begin to see what God is after and we begin to seek that which God is after, we co-labor with God for this, to preserve the soul, that is the mind, the will and the emotions, and the body of this child because we know someday God has plans for them. What a wonderful favor we do to those children. What a tremendous disfavor and a hurt and a burden we place on them if we neglect our responsibilities.

Verses begin to take new meaning when we look at it this way. A child left to himself. Yes, a child left to himself.

What? A child that is not regenerated. A child that does not have God living inside of it. A child that cannot fellowship with God who is left to himself.

His soul will become defiled, his body will become defiled, all kinds of wrong things will be in there and all of that. And please don't misunderstand me. They're going to have things to work through.

But why give them a great big pile when you can just give them a little pile if you watch over their lives and guide them a bit. Consider with me just a little bit this evening the mind of a child. Here you get a new baby.

This baby comes to you. God gives you this child. This child's mind is clean, fresh, empty.

It's like a blank sheet of paper. It's like a computer with nothing on the memory. Amen? Nothing, nothing, nothing on the memory.

What are we going to do with this fresh, clean, empty, pure mind? What are we going to do with it? Will we protect it from the multitudes of media that would fill it full of all kinds of things that shouldn't be in there? The TV, the radio, books and computers and all those kind of things. Will we protect the child from useless data going into its mind that it really doesn't need, that isn't going to help him for anything? Will we protect the child from the foolish data that could go into its mind, worldly data and even filthy data? What kind of words will enter into this little child's mind as it grows up in the home? You know, some parents foolishly think that a little one-year-old, they can say anything they want when a little one-year-old is around. It's okay to have a fight with your wife or you know, carry on and fuss against your husband.

It's just a one-year-old, they can't understand what you're saying anyway. That is a foolish mistake, my friend. All those words are going into that computer.

And by the way, every fire emotional upheaval in your home is also going into the emotions of that child but that's a little later here in the lesson tonight. What kind of words will enter into the mind of that child in the home that it grows up into? Look at it on the positive side. On the positive, what good words and thoughts will enter in there? Bible? How much Bible? Bible stories? Holy books? Sermons? Holy discussions around the table? Theology on the Sunday afternoon? 7,300 family devotions? If you have one a day, six days a week for 20 years? All those things are going into this mind which you got and it was totally blank when you got it.

All those things are going into that little mind for 20 years. Do you suppose that's going to have an effect upon that child? You can be sure it will. That's one of the reasons why all of our days, all of our children started listening to the Bible on cassette when they took their naps and went to bed from before they were one years old.

Before they could decipher all the words and what they meant. There they were laying in their crib listening to the Word of God. Do you know how many times they've been through the Word of God and the Bible on cassette? By the time they get to be 16 years old? My, it must be 20, 25 times.

Do you suppose that's going to affect this child? How it lives? I believe it is. You know, consider, consider this this evening. You know Fannie Crosby? That dear lady that wrote all those songs? You know, I understand Fannie Crosby she didn't get regenerated until she was around 21, 22 years old.

But that little lady she lost her eyesight when she was 2 or 3 years old and her dear grandma said I will be Fannie's eyes. And that grandma sat beside that little girl and went over the Word of God with her and that little girl memorized chapters scores of chapters from the Word of God. I mean, long before she ever got regenerated in the center of her being she probably had, oh, a couple hundred chapters in the Word of God hidden away in her mind.

But, when the Holy Ghost came into the center of that dear lady's being when the Word of God and the Spirit of God met together inside of Fannie Crosby she started cranking out hymns 2 or 3 thousand of them. I mean, she became a hymn making machine. That's a beautiful example of what I'm talking about.

What a blessing! What a favor grandma did for Fannie to do that to her. Yes, sure enough, she needed to get converted but bless God, I'm sure she was much happier to have all this filled up with the Word of God on the day of her salvation than to have it filled with a bunch of junk. That's what we're talking about.

What about the will? We've been speaking about the will. That's part of our soul. Mind, will and emotions.

Well, I don't have to say a whole lot. That's pretty clear to us. We had a whole sermon on that but I would just like to pull it back in here this evening and so what we're doing is we're just kind of pulling back the veil a little bit and looking at the reasons why God just said raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

This is the reason why God has said it. Because God wants to use that child someday and God wants us to preserve that child so that He can use it someday even though they need to get born again. We do them such a great favor if while we filled their mind with the Word of God we have also been working on their will.

Give up your will. A parent should be saying this. Not thy will, my child, but mine be done.

Because the day will come when that child will have to say not my will, O Lord, but thine be done. Oh, what a favor you do that child. If that child learns to bow their will and give it over to their parents and give it over to others, whoever may be over them giving them some direction.

What a favor you do for that child because someday God's gonna come and dwell in them and guess what? He needs a willing vessel. Now, I'm not sure if I can prove this but it seems to me in all my studies of home histories that most of these home histories that I've been studying, you know, where generations go forth like this most of them were about this principle right here. Their parents watched over their mind their will and their emotions.

Then, one day, the Spirit of God came and look out. I mean, think about John Wesley. He didn't get converted, regenerated till he was 35 years old but man, when he got converted I mean, when the Spirit of God came inside of that man with all the training that mama gave him and all the training that daddy gave him and all the other disciplines that the Methodist little class had there in the school when the Holy Ghost came in look out, here comes John Wesley and he turned the world upside down, bless God.

He did. That's what we're talking about. It seems to me that those children who are preserved and watched over, like what we're saying when the Holy Ghost comes they hit the ground running and they do something for God.

We must train them to give up and yield their will. That's what we must be doing. Number three, let's look at the emotions now.

Mind, will and emotion, right? Emotions. That's our affections, our feelings. That is the affections and the feelings of the child.

Remember? Remember the palate? Training the palate? This is where the emotions come in. That place of affection within the child. God wants us to train their affections in the right direction.

You know, I thought about it the other day. You know, a little boy, lots of times, and I know we did this when we had little boys, we would get a little Bible for our two-year-old boy. And that, I mean, we usually taped it shut because otherwise you know what will happen to it when they're two.

But you tape it shut, but you give them their little Bible. And here they go to church. Man, they're holding on to that Bible.

They're so excited about it. They're not going to give it to anybody else. Hey, they don't, he doesn't know what's in that thing.

He hasn't opened any of it up. He hasn't read one word in it yet. But somehow he's excited about it.

Why is he excited about that little Bible? Because everybody else in the house is excited about their Bible. And now he has one just like everybody else has. Do you know what they're doing? Do you know what those parents are doing? Training the emotions of that little boy.

That's what they're doing. That's what God wants us to do. Train the emotions and the affections of our children in a right path.

Because someday God's going to say, Okay, my son, give me my heart. When God comes in, God will be able to do something with that vessel whose affections are already so many of them leaning in the direction that God will want them to go. What a favor you do your child if you train the emotions of that child to love the right things.

Now it's true when God comes to dwell inside of them, the Holy Ghost inspiration will cause them to love the Bible like they never dreamed that they could ever love the Bible. However, they can still love the Bible the way they do until they get filled with the Holy Ghost. It's okay.

That's training the emotions, the affection of the child. By the way, that's one of the reasons why I'm very concerned about extreme emotions. You see, if a child learns the emotion of anger, that is an extreme emotion.

That's something they're going to have to deal with when the Holy Ghost comes. But what a blessing if you can raise a child and watch over it in such a way that it never even knows what that fitful rage and anger is all about. Did you know that a child could grow up without ever having a fit of rage and anger? Sure, they're going to get frustrated.

Sure, they're going to be upset at times. But I'm talking about this explosion of rage and anger. They never ever need to know what it is, especially if you keep them away from a television set.

When a child comes to us, their emotions are totally blank. Totally blank. What are you going to put on there? I mean, what are you going to add in there? Oh, let's see.

We want them to love this. We want them to love this. We want them to love the Bible.

We want them to love to go to church. We want them to love God's people. We want them to love Grandma and Grandpa.

We want them to love Papa and Mama. These are the things we want them to love. Then, when the Holy Ghost comes, they'll really love all those things then.

They'll really love them then. We watch over the thrill level of our children for this very reason. What thrills your child is not a little thing.

It's not a little thing. That's in the area of emotions again. And I'll say more about that in the next message.

Brothers and sisters, this is the whole purpose for teaching and training. You fill the mind with the right things. You guide the will to choose the right.

You encourage the emotions to be excited about the right things. You build godly character in them. Every time you design a project which instills godly character in that child, you further their Christian life in the future.

That's what you do. What a favor. What a favor you do for them.

Now, let's look at the body. That's also in there. The child comes to you.

Their body is also pure. It hasn't been defiled yet in the sense of having some defiling experience. It hasn't been through that yet.

We do them such a great favor if we teach them how to bring their body into subjection. If we teach them when the alarm goes off that they on their own say, Okay, body, get up. It's time to get out of bed.

There are some in this room even this evening. You still have a hard time getting out of bed when the alarm goes off. What a favor you do your child if that child learns that.

If a child learns that it can control its appetites and it doesn't have to overeat every time it sits down at the table. If a child learns that it's okay to have a sweet every now and then, but we're not going to live on sweets all the time. Every one of those patterns is a wrong pattern that is being trained into a child or a right pattern that they have to live with the rest of their life.

What a favor we do them if we give some training to this area that they learn moderation, that they learn to deny their body and tell their body, No, not now. You know, some people may react and say, I have a problem with you. I have a problem with you having a five-year-old fast.

Well, guess what? When the Holy Ghost comes, that fasting stuff is going to take on some powerful meaning in that child's life. But now, that child is learning to discipline his body. My body is not going to rule me.

Amen? A child can learn that their body is not going to rule them. Amen? How beautiful for the child whose body and soul has been guided, disciplined and motivated in right paths. It is easy to see what will happen

when they come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Can you see, my dear parents, that you give them such a head start? If you will be careful how you guide and direct the child, even though you know someday they will need to get born again. You give them such a head start. Salvation is a sanctified relationship between man and the God who saved him, washed him and dwells within him.

When God comes to live in a child who has been watched over and cared for, the battle is short-lived. Amen? Because the child has been taught to yield and the child's mind is full of the Word of God. And their emotions have been set on so many right things.

The battle is short-lived until that child comes and brings his heart and life totally under the guidance and the direction of the Spirit of God, which every one of us know is the will of God for every one of them. And every one of us know how many struggles we have in our lives because we didn't get that kind of oversight. I mean, yes, bless God, an old hippie like me can get born again.

But I'll tell you what, on a tough road, oh, yeah, we make it. But you won't see me running as fast as my children will run. We do them such a favor, such a favor if we watch over those things in their life.

After our children are converted, after they come to that age of accountability, and God regenerates them in their inner man. Is that it then? Is our job done? No, no it isn't. Because we still see where God is going.

And once God comes to dwell in the center of man's being, then God by His Spirit will be on a sanctification program, and He's going to bring everything of the body and everything of the soul into complete subjection. And as that happens, He can use that child. So, our child gets converted, we just join right in with God and we keep on going.

What do we do? We nurture and care and pray and disciple our young person into a solid disciple of Jesus Christ who can walk with God, live with a clear conscience, and you can tell they are beginning to listen to the voice of God and do what God says without Papa telling them to do it. That is the goal. That's where we're going.

Someone gave me this just this evening. I don't know who gave it to me, but the Lord gave it to me. They put it in my hand.

It has a beautiful picture of an innocent little child on the front of it. And here's what it says. I'm sure you know this already.

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty. But if a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate. If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice. If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself. If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love everywhere in the world. I don't know who wrote that.

But you know, that is a beautiful description of how it should be in our homes. Here comes this sweet, little, beautiful, innocent child. Bright and open and as bright and open as a new spring day.

If we bring that child into the right kind of an environment. And we begin to nurture that child. And we are very careful to watch over what goes in to the mind.

And how the will responds. And what the emotions love. And what the body does and doesn't do.

Oh, that child has got such a head start if we'll do that. I want to encourage you parents to watch over your children. You know, many a child has been defiled on a Sunday afternoon in a bedroom upstairs.

While mom and dad were downstairs having a little fellowship over the Bible. Some other child encouraged them. Why don't we try this? Why don't we do this? And the body was defiled.

That doesn't need to ever happen. It never needs to happen. But it requires us parents to be alert.

To be awake. To be watching. To be guiding.

To take the oversight of our children. To recognize that everything that goes in is going to affect that child. Everything that goes in.

Every experience they go through is going to have an effect on them. And we can't stop everything. But we can surely do our part.

And watch over their lives and put the right things in there. And I tell you brothers and sisters. This is the inside story of everything that I've been saying all week long.

Because God wants to come and dwell in your child. Let's stand for prayer. God our Father.

Oh Lord we thank you. For every sweet little innocent child. You put in our hands Father.

God. Some of us. It's all done.

But some of us. We're just getting started. And some of us.

Are in the middle of this whole process. But all of us. Can learn.

From this lesson oh God. The lesson. The lesson that we have here before us tonight.

God we want to be faithful. To the charge. That you've given to us.

As you give us. Your sons and daughters. To raise for you oh Lord.

I pray that your wisdom be in our hearts. As we guide our children. In Jesus Christ's name.

Amen.

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