

Children & Childhood *in the Bible*

A Workbook

A comprehensive look at what the Bible has to say about children, their relationship with God, our attitudes and actions towards them and their place in the family, community and church.

Contents

PAGE	CONTENT
3	Acknowledgements
4	Introduction
6	Section One: The Worth of a Child
8	Lesson 1: The Biblical View of the Origin and Status of Children
12	Lesson 2: Parents in the Bible Wanted Children
18	Lesson 3: Childbirth in Bible Times
23	Lesson 4: The Grief of Barrenness and Miscarriage
27	Lesson 5: The Sacredness of Unborn Life
32	Lesson 6: Jesus' Attitude Toward Children
36	Section Two: Spiritual Openness of Children
37	Lesson 7: Who is the Child?
43	Lesson 8: The Capacity of Children to Understand the Faith
47	Lesson 9: God Uses Children for Special Tasks
51	Lesson 10: God Uses Children to Influence Adults
56	Lesson 11: Children as Signs of the Coming Kingdom
60	Lesson 12: Should Infants be Baptized?"
63	Lesson 13: God's Promises and Blessings for the Generations
68	Section Three: Children in Biblical Families
70	Lesson 14: The Naming of Children
74	Lesson 15: Family Membership and Size
78	Lesson 16: The Influence of Extended Families in Children's Lives
83	Lesson 17: Children's Responsibilities Toward Parents
88	Lesson 18: Biblical Contexts of Honoring and Obedience
93	Lesson 19: Sibling Rivalry
97	Section Four: The Training and Nurture of Children
98	Lesson 20: Parental Responsibilities in Bible Families
102	Lesson 21: How are Parents to Teach Their Children?
106	Lesson 22: What are Parents to Teach Their Children?
110	Lesson 23: The Impact of Parental Modeling – and of Indifference
115	Lesson 24: Disciplining Children
119	Lesson 25: The Education of Jesus
123	Section Five: Children at Risk in the Bible
124	Lesson 26: Children as Victims of Infanticide and Sacrifice
129	Lesson 27: Victims of Abuse and Exploitation
133	Lesson 28: Will Infants Who Die Go to Heaven?
137	Lesson 29: Child Protection in the Bible
141	Lesson 30: Biblical Perspectives on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
147	Appendix: Hebrew and Greek Words for Children
149	Bibliography

Acknowledgements

THIS IDEA for this study came from a reading of the excellent book *Precious in His Sight* by Roy B. Zuck (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Mi., 1996). In my mind, it is one of the best works available on biblical texts and understandings of childhood and children. It seemed good to capture and group some of the materials from that book into various "sets" of verses which would allow learners to glean insights, principles and themes concerning children from the

grouped verses and passages. The first version proved to be a valuable tool for study and exploration, reflection and application, as students reviewed what the Bible says on the various topics, comparing and contrasting these with the attitudes and mindsets of their cultures and societies today.

Almost all the material in the first version was based on gleanings from *Precious in His Sight*, and I am grateful to Dr. Zuck for permission and encouragement to explore in his book for those insights and principles. The studies in that version were only a surface “mining” of the insights from that marvelous book. This version takes that mining further, though I have also added a good deal of material which is not found in Zuck’s book. I have provided some suggestions for further reading and study from other resources and a bibliography at the end of this book.

The purpose of this workbook is to help learners dig deep into the Word to see what it says about children and childhood. But more importantly, it is to create understanding of the worth and significance of children, and their role in illumination and “signing” of Christ’s “upside down” Kingdom. As we see some of both the breadth and depth of biblical material concerning children and childhood, we may interpret Scripture in new ways, and rethink how we view the Church, Mission, and in furthering the Kingdom.

Introduction

SOME PEOPLE have said that the Bible has little to say about children and childhood. Most pastors and even some theologians know that Jesus said “Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mark 10:14). Some church leaders will have a few more verses in their repertoire.

But what many don't realize is that, in fact, the Scriptures are full of references to children. A closer examination of Scripture – one with the child in focus – reveals that children are actually very prominent in the Bible. This workbook includes nearly 1,000 verses relating to the child. But our study will also show that children play a significant role in the unfolding of the message of the Bible - that God loves and protects them; that they are extremely perceptive in understanding the things of God; and that God often deploys them as His messengers and models – often it seems when adults may have been too corrupt and deaf to His calling.

Dr. Keith White reminds us¹ that overlooking the vast amount of biblical material about children may well have caused us to make fundamental mistakes about the Kingdom of God and about Mission. “We [may] have gone about *theology* in the wrong way.”² We have got our priorities mixed up in the church. And we have contributed to societies where adults, power, wealth and possessions are the only things that matter. This workbook is only a start, but it may help to address this problem.

This workbook contains 5 sections on children and childhood. Each section has several themes with a variety of Bible verses or reflections about children. Following a brief introduction on each topic, there is a heading called “**What Does the Bible Say?**” Here, you will be asked to go to specific Bible passages to explore what the Bible says about children and understand more of God's heart for children.

From those passages, you will find key insights related to the theme. Write down your observations under the heading “**Key Insights**”. Then, review the key insights and list down the specific principles or themes which you yourself (or your group) discover about children and/or childhood under the heading “**Biblical Principles/Themes.**”

Following the “**Biblical Principles/Themes**” there is also the “**Reflection Questions**” section which asks you to apply the biblical insights to your own personal life, culture and society. The response to some questions may be very obvious while others may require a bit more reflection and discovery on your part. There are no right or wrong answers to the reflection questions, but they will provide the basis for interesting and lively discussions about how children are viewed and treated in your own cultures/countries.

Where I have quoted Scripture, I have used the New International Version. However, as you are doing your studies, you may profit from using a variety of versions if they are available to you. Also, while often only single verses are given, you will always want to read the Scriptures around those verses to be sure you have a good grasp of the settings and contexts.

Whether you are a front-line childcare worker or a church or organization leader, I trust that this study will encourage and inspire you, and give you broad new insights about children and childhood in the Bible – and about your ministry and mission priorities. Enjoy!

¹ Keith White, “A Little Child Shall Lead Them – Rediscovering Children at the Heart of Mission” Paper presented to the Cutting Edge conference, De Bron, Holland, 2001.

² Ibid.

The Worth of a Child

AT THE beginning of Roy Zuck's book *Precious in His Sight*, he presents two groups of sentences reflecting common attitudes about children.

Do these statements describe your feelings about children?³

"Children are such a nuisance! I don't like to be around children because they are so demanding and annoying."

"My wife and I don't plan to have children. We can't be tied down to parenting, which demands such time, energy, attention, and money."

"I'm pregnant, but I don't want a baby. So I'll simply get an abortion."

"How can I have time for child-rearing when my career demands so much time?"

"Changing diapers, getting up in the night with a sick child, helping kids with homework are not for me. I'd rather be child-free."

Or do these more accurately reflect your feelings about children and childhood?⁴

"Children are so much fun! They are full of life and energy, and are so eager to learn new things."

"I enjoy the way children respond so readily to love and attention."

"Raising kids is one of the greatest rewards in all of life."

"It's a delight to teach children. They are so open to spiritual truths."

The two extremes are common among people in many cultures today. Interestingly, similar attitudes about children were apparently common in biblical times as well. We know from the well-traveled passage in Mark 10:13, that Jesus' disciples certainly didn't think children were worthy of taking His valuable time. But Jesus had a different attitude. Mark says Jesus was indignant – very displeased and told the disciples in no uncertain terms that they were to let the children to come to Him, and He demonstrated His love by taking the children in His arms and blessing them (Mark 10:16).

That contrast provides a good starting point for our reflections on what the Bible says about children, and how our churches, communities, societies and cultures view the worth and role of children. Our first studies will zero in on the inherent worth of children, regardless of their gender, status, health or any other external characteristics.

Let's begin.

³ Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight – Childhood & Children in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996). 11.

⁴ Ibid.

The Biblical View of the Origin and Status of Children

WHAT, IN fact, does the Bible say about the origin and status of children? The Bible's perspectives on children are both explicit and implicit. They provide the basis of how children should be treated and valued. They form the core foundation from which all child development agencies should view and structure their work. They are eternal principles that speak to our conscience daily in our personal encounters with children.

Let us explore the origin, status, formation, images and perception of children both in the Old and New Testament.

What Does The Bible Say?

1. What do these verses say about the origin of children? Genesis 1:27; 4:25; 33:5; Ruth 4:13; Job 10:10-11; Psalms 71:6.
2. God's first command to Adam and Eve concerns children. What was it? How does this reflect the status of children in families and society? (Genesis 1:28).
3. Psalm 139:13 says that we are "knit together" in our mother's womb. What are the other words used in the following verses to describe the formation of the child in the mother's womb?

References	Words Used for Formation of the Child
Genesis 2:7	
Job 10:8,9; 31:15	
Psalms 103:14	
Ecclesiastes 11:5	
Isaiah 29:16; 44:2	
Jeremiah 18:6	
Romans 9:21	

4. How were children perceived in the Bible? Discuss the images attributed to children in these passages and the implications for the way children should be perceived today:

References	Images of Children	Implications for Perceiving Children
Genesis 17:16		
Genesis 30:20; 30:6		
Genesis 48:9		
Isaiah 8:18		
Psalms 127:3,4		
Psalms 144:12		

5. God's relationship with Israel in the Old Testament has often been compared to a father's relationship with His children e.g. Deuteronomy 14:1. Why? How does this relate to Genesis 17:4-7? What do these references say regarding God's view on children?

6. Many passages throughout the Old and New Testament reveal God's heart for children. List the insights or "themes" you find regarding children in these references:

Reference	Insights or "Themes"
Genesis 21:17-20	
Exodus 2:4-9	
Deuteronomy 6:6,7	
1 Kings 17:22	
2 Kings 5:2-5	
1 Sam 3:1,19-21	
Psalms 8:2	
Psalms 34:11	
Psalms 82:3-4	
Psalms 131:2	
Proverbs 1:8,9	
Proverbs 22:6	
Isaiah 7:14	
Isaiah 9:6	
Isaiah 11:6-9	
Isaiah 66:13	
Matthew 11:25	
Matthew 19:13-15	
Matthew 21:16	
Mark 10:15-16	
Luke 2:41-52	
2 Timothy 3:15	

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. In *Precious in His Sight*, Zuck notes the significant number of Bible references on children viz. “child” (121 times); “children” (448 times); “childhood” (4 times) and “son/s” (2,700 times). There are more than 1,400 references to children, childhood, parenting and other matters relating to children in the Index of Scripture References at the end of his book. What are the implications of this number of references? How would an understanding of what the Bible says about children affect the attitudes of adults towards children?
2. Consider the contrasting statements in the introduction to this chapter. Which of those attitudes are common among your friends or in your culture/society? What other similar things do people in your culture sometimes say about children?
3. How are children treated in your family and community? Are they treated as a blessing or a burden? Has this changed in recent generations? Why?
4. How do the media portray children in your society? (Think of the roles of child actors in local movies and children in TV advertisements, magazines and newspapers). How do these images affect the way children are treated in your society?
5. How might studies on biblical perspectives of children affect the perception of children in your culture? What role can you play to correct wrong perceptions and treatment of children in your culture (home, school and community)?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 11-15; 39-44 and 53-56.

Parents in the Bible Wanted Children

DO PARENTS really want children in today's postmodern societies? If so, why is family size decreasing and increasing number of couples opting for "child-free" marriages?

It is clear from Scripture that women (and men) *wanted* to have children. Moreover, God wanted His people to bear children. The first commandment given in Scripture was to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). Barren Sarah referred to having children as a "pleasure" (Genesis 18:12). Job *delighted* in having his children around him (Job 29:5) and the psalmist refers to the "*happy mother of children*" (Psalms 113:9).

Childlessness was a considered a disgrace (Genesis 30:23), and misery (Genesis 29:32; 1 Samuel 1:11). Barren women of the Bible were sometimes desperate to have children: "Give me children or I'll die!" cried Rachel (Genesis 30:1). Note also Hannah's desperation to have children (1 Samuel 1:7-16).

Childlessness is also a problem in the 21st Century with many married couples facing the problem of infertility. To fill the gap of childlessness, many couples chose to adopt while others are satisfied in roles as foster parents. Zuck points out that "as of 1991, more than one million children were in adoptive families."⁵ Thousands more couples are waiting in line for more babies to be available for adoption.⁶

It is interesting to note that the New Testament uses the theme of adoption to illustrate some pertinent theological truths. When we place these two pictures side by side – barrenness and adoption – once again, "the child in the midst" will shed some light on our human predicament.

What Does The Bible Say?

1. Read the following verses. How did these parents respond to having children?

Reference	Parents	Response
Genesis 30:13	Leah	
Jeremiah 20:15	Hilkiah (Jeremiah's father)	
Hosea 9:16	Hosea	
Luke 1:14	Zechariah	
Luke 1:58	Elizabeth	

2. How did these biblical parents regard their children? Leah (Genesis 30:11); Rachel (30:6); Joseph (48:9); Hannah (1 Samuel. 1:11-19)

3. Why were parents in the Bible desperate to have children? Identify the reason for each of these parents:

Parents	References	Reason for Desperation to Have Children
Leah	Genesis 30:13	
Joseph	Genesis 47:11-12	
Boaz and Ruth	Ruth 4:10, 15	
A widow from Tekoa	2 Samuel 14:7	

⁵ Zuck quoting from *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1995* (Mahwah, N.J.: Funk & Wagnalls, 1994), 962.

⁶ Ibid.

Absalom	2 Samuel 18:8	
Job	Job 29:5	
Jeremiah	Jeremiah 11:19	
Zechariah and Elizabeth	Luke 1:58	

4. Read each of the following verse and list what they say about parents' love for their children:

References	Parents	Statements on Parents' Love for Children
Genesis 21:15-16	Hagar	
Genesis 25:28	Isaac and Rebekah	
Genesis 37:3	Jacob	
Genesis 37:31-35	Jacob	
Genesis 42:38	Jacob	
Genesis 44:22,29, 31,34	Jacob	
Exodus 2:3	Moses' mother	
2 Samuel 12:15-17	David	
2 Samuel 18:13	David	
2 Samuel 13:37-14:1	David	
Job 29:5	Job	
Psalms 103:13	Teachings of David	
Proverbs 3:12	Wisdom from Solomon	
Proverbs 13:24	Wisdom from Solomon	
Isaiah 49:15	God as spiritual "mother"	
Luke 20:13	Owner of vineyard	
Luke 15:20-24	A man with two sons	
Luke 8:41-42	Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue	
John 4:46-49	A royal Official	
1 Thessalonians 2:7	Paul and the apostles as spiritual "mother"	
Titus 2:4	Paul's exhortation to Titus	

5. Identify the children who were adopted or "fostered" in these verses, and note their respective circumstances:

References	Adoptive/Foster Parents	Child's Name/Circumstances
1 Chronicles 2:34-335	Sheshan	Jarha
Esther 2:7,15	Mordecai	
Exodus 2:10; Acts 7:21,22	Pharaoh's daughter	

6. In Genesis 15:2, Abram considered adopting his servant Eliezer of Damascus: “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.” Did Abram really wanted Eliezer as his child? Why or why not?

7. From the following NT passages, write briefly the spiritual truths Paul taught on adoption:

Reference	References to Adoption	Spiritual Truths
Romans 8:15	“You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship [adoption].”	
Romans 8:23	“...we ourselves,...groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons...”	
Romans 9:4	“..the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons...”	
Galatians 4:5	“...to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”	
Ephesians 1:5	“..he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...”	

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

(Note: This study can be a painful one for some women because they too may feel the agony of childlessness. If there are such women in your group, or such women whom you know, you will want to be sensitive to their feelings in this discussion).

1. Why are many modern parents not desperate to have children? From your discovery above, compare and contrast the attitudes of parents in the Bible with today’s parents concerning having children.

2. What are your feelings about married couples intentionally opting for a childless marriage? What legitimate reasons are there for doing so? What reasons are not legitimate?

3. In what ways has a “post-modern” mindset influenced parents’ attitudes toward children? How can you, as a spiritual leader, restore or increase parental love and respect for children in your culture?

4. Some women today, of course, are themselves desperate to have children. What are some of the ways that “barren” women seek to have children today? What are your feelings about having “test-tube” babies, or other means available today to aid in conception?

5. Bio-technology today may enable parents to “design” their own babies e.g. selecting the color of the babies’ eyes, hair and predetermining the shape of the baby’s nose, face and even the sex of the baby.
 - What is your opinion of these “designer babies?” technology? How different or similar is this technology from cloning?⁷

 - How is this technology a blessing or curse to families and society as a whole?

 - Can you identify one similar incident in the Bible where man tried to be like God and take the place of the Creator? What did men do and what were the consequences?

 - Where do you think the demand for designer babies come from? Consider: Would “normal” couples who genuinely want a family and nurture children of their own resort to such means of having babies?

6. What is your opinion on child adoption and fostering? Are these practices common in your culture? Why? Share with your group testimonies on child adoption or fostering.

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 45-53, 96-99.

Michael J. Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection” in *Atlantic Monthly*, pages 50-62.

⁷ For an excellent discussion on the ethics of “designer children,” see Michael J. Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection” in *Atlantic Monthly* (April 2004), 50-62.

Childbirth in Bible Times

CHILDBIRTH IS one of the most amazing and complex experiences in life. No one can fathom exactly the marvelous way a child is formed and brought into this world. Despite the “remarkable facts,”⁸ science has revealed to us about the development of a baby in a mother’s womb, pregnancy and childbirth remain deep mysteries. Such is the mystery that whenever a child is born, it “stagger[s] the imagination and causes parents to experience a deep sense of amazement and awe.”⁹

Yet, while the birth of a child is an occasion of joy, the act of giving birth itself is often described in Scripture as the epitome of pain and suffering. Moreover, there is always the risk of miscarriages, stillbirth and birth defects.

What does the Bible have to say about the joys and pains of childbirth? How did the people of old respond to these extremes of experiences in childbirth?

What Does The Bible Say?

1. What is said about childbearing in the following verses?

References	Statements on Childbearing
<i>1 Samuel 4:19</i>	
<i>1 Chronicles 4:9</i>	
<i>Psalms 48:6</i>	
<i>Isaiah 26:17-18</i>	
<i>Isaiah 13:8</i>	
<i>Jeremiah 6:24; 13:21; 22:23</i>	
<i>Jeremiah 49:22; 48:41; 49:24</i>	
<i>Jeremiah 50:43</i>	
<i>Micah 4:9-10</i>	

2. Women in the Bible were exhilarated at the prospect of being pregnant and giving birth to children (even through their maidservants). Note how these women reacted to their pregnancies and to giving birth:

Reference	Mother's Name	Child's Name	Mother's Expressions
<i>Genesis 4:1</i>	Eve	Cain	
<i>Genesis 4:25</i>	Eve	Seth	
<i>Genesis 30:11</i>	Leah	Gad	
<i>Genesis 30:18</i>	Leah	Issachar	

⁸ Zuck, 53, quoting from Lennart Nilsson and Lars Hamberger, *A Child Is Born*, trans. Clare James (New York: Delacorte Press, 1990), 39, 78, 83, 85, 108.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Genesis 30:20 Leah Zebulun

Genesis 30:23 Rachel Joseph

1 Samuel 1:11,19 Hannah Samuel

3. Describe the conditions/places women in the Bible gave birth to children:

Reference	Conditions/Places of Childbirth	Help Received
Genesis 30:3		
Genesis 35:8		
Genesis 35:17		
Genesis 38:27-30		
Exodus 1:16		
Exodus 2:9		
Ruth 4:14		
Job 3:12		
Song of Songs 8:5		
Ezekiel 16:4		

4. One of the punishments mankind suffered after Adam and Eve sinned was increased “pains in child bearing” (Genesis 3:16). Since then, the pain of childbirth has become a metaphor for the worst kind of suffering or anguish. Identify the context which compares human sufferings to labor pains:

References	Place/Person	Context of Human Suffering
Psalms 48:6	Jerusalem	
Isaiah 13:8; Jeremiah 50:43	Babylon	
Isaiah 21:3	Judah	
Isaiah 23:4	Tyre	
Isaiah 26:17-18; 66:7	Jerusalem	
Jeremiah 30:6,7	-	
Jeremiah 48:41	Moab	
Jeremiah 49:22	Edom	
Jeremiah 49:24	Damascus	
Hosea 13:13	Israel	
1 Thessalonians 5:3	-	
Romans 8:22	-	

Key Insights:**Biblical Principles/Themes:****Reflections Questions:**

1. Discuss the statement: "Since He assigns children to parents, there is no such thing as an 'accidental' birth' or a 'surprise pregnancy' from God's viewpoint."¹⁰ Do you agree? What are the viewpoints in your society and their consequences?

2. Zuck notes that although "some babies born in Bible times had physical defects," they were not abandoned or put to death because of their handicaps. E.g. a man born blind (John 9:1-7), a beggar born crippled (Acts 3:1-10) and a man born lame (Acts 14:8-10). Discuss how these "special" children were mightily used by God to promote His Kingdom. What are the implications for child development ministries for "special" children?

3. The Bible mentions some precautions involving food and diet (Manoah's wife in Judges 13:4-5, 7) and the confinement period (Elizabeth in Luke 1:24) for women in their pregnancies. What are some of the preparations, precautions and traditional observances for pregnant women in your culture? What are the backgrounds for some of these observances? Are they generally helpful or harmful?

4. Discuss the conditions/places and the help women receive in childbirth in your culture. What are the pros and cons? What positive or negative effects do these birth conditions/places have on the young infants and their subsequent childhood?

¹⁰ Zuck. 46, quoting from Charles R. Swindoll, *Living Beyond the Daily Grind, Book II* (Dallas, Tex.: Word Publishing, 1988), 326.

5. What risks do women face in pregnancy in your culture? Do these risks affect the parents' attitudes toward their children? Do these risks cause them from to have more or fewer children? Do they cause the parents to treasure or despise their children? Why?

6. Do you see any evidence in Scripture of an active role of fathers in childbirth? In your culture, what roles do husbands play during their wives' pregnancy and childbirth?

7. What do you think the Apostle Paul means in 1 Timothy 2:15 "But women will be saved through childbearing -- if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety"? (For an excellent discussion of 7 possible meanings of this surprising verse, see Zuck, 69, 70.)

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 45-63, 69-70.

The Grief of Barrenness and Miscarriage

BARRENNESS WAS an embarrassment and a social disgrace to the Israelite wives in Bible times. Just as childbearing signified God's favor, barrenness was perceived as a punishment from God. Job 15:34 says that the company of the godless is "barren." As we will discover in the Bible, barrenness was occasionally a result of sin. More often, it was not a result of sin. But even then, a barren woman was often despised, harassed or treated with suspicion by husbands, in-laws and communities. Given such a harsh environment, perhaps it is no wonder women in Bible times were desperate to have children.

What Does The Bible Say?

- Sometimes the Bible gives reasons why women were barren. Note the reasons why these women in the Bible were barren:

Reference	Mother	Reasons for Barrenness
Genesis 20:18	Women in Abimelech's household	
Genesis 16:2	Sarah	
Genesis 30:2	Rachel	
Leviticus 20:20, 21	Women in general	
Numbers 5:20-22, 31	Women in general	
2 Samuel 6:20-23	Michal	
Luke 1:6,7	Elizabeth	

- What are the causes of miscarriages and stillbirth in these verses?

References	Cause of Miscarriages
Exodus 21:22-23	
Exodus 23:25-26	
Hosea 9:14	
Psalms 58:8	

- The following women suffered deep anguish because of their barrenness. List the words that expressed their pain.

References	Barren Wife	Words of Anguish
Genesis 29:32	Leah	
Genesis 30:23	Rachel	
1 Samuel 1:8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18	Hannah	
Luke 1:25	Elizabeth	

4. List 4 ways women in the Bible devised to bear or acquire children. Identify the motivations behinds their actions:

References	Women	Actions/Motivations
Genesis 16:1-3, 15; 30:3-8; 30:9-13.		
Genesis 30:14; Song of Songs 7:13		
1 Samuel 1:11; Proverbs 31:2		
Deuteronomy 25:5-10, Genesis 38; Ruth, Luke 20:28		

5. Jesus prophetically predicted that the tribulation that will precede His millennial reign on earth will be especially difficult “for pregnant women and nursing mothers.” (Matthew 24:19; Luke 21:23). Why? (Read *Precious in His Sight*, pages 55-56.) What kind of atrocities did women have to suffer during wars and national upheavals? Re. Amos 1:13; 2 Kings 8:12 and Hosea 13:16.

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflections Questions:

1. What are the attitudes in your culture concerning barrenness, miscarriages and stillbirth? Who bears the brunt of the “disgrace?” Why?
2. In your opinion, what are the reasons for barrenness in today’s culture? Has delayed pregnancy through modern birth control methods contributed to barrenness amongst women today?

3. Recall from the passages in number 3 in the Section above. What do you suppose things like mandrakes had to do with fertility and conception? What measures do women in your culture take to overcome barrenness? Which practices are godly and which are not? How effective are these practices? What are the long-term effects on both the mother and baby?

4. On page 51 of *Precious In His Sight*, the author notes that it was culturally acceptable for a wife “to purchase a slave woman by whom her husband could father a child. He could then dispose of the slave by sale or send her away.” Discuss why this was an acceptable practice in Bible times but is not today.

5. What is your opinion on modern day surrogate motherhood? Have you heard of wealthy women “renting a womb” or “outsourcing their pregnancy” through poor women? Do you feel it is a moral crime and a violation of the rights and dignity of poor women? Discuss.

6. As discussed earlier, pregnant women like Samson’s mother (Judges 13:4-5, 7) and Elizabeth (Luke 1:24) were subjected to special diets and home confinement to ensure a healthy full term delivery. How have the 21st century lifestyles affected the health of mothers and their unborn child in their pregnancy term, both positively and negatively?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 50-57.

The Sacredness of Unborn Life

FEW SOCIAL issues in recent times have provoked such passionate support and condemnation as the matter of abortion. The contending issue is: “When does life begin?” The “Pro-choice” (pro-abortion really) camp would have us believe “that the fetus is not a person and that, therefore, a woman has a legal and moral right to end a pregnancy if she so chooses.”¹¹ They argue further that every child should be a wanted child, and that aborting an unplanned or “inconvenient” unborn child is only being responsible and preventing the likelihood of a future of neglect or mistreatment. Surely such a stance trivializes all human life, and ultimately demeans the existence of even the children allowed to be born. Interesting but tragically, “pro-choicers” have placed themselves as gods – if the mother wants a baby, then the fetus is a child, if not, then it is just a piece of tissue which can be done away with.

Since the United States Supreme Court gave women the legal right to abort their unborn babies in 1973, more than 28 million unborn babies have been aborted. And each year in the States, 1.6 million unborn babies die as a result of their “Pro-choice” mothers.¹²

In our previous studies, we have seen that God forms children in the womb: Job 10:8-11; Psalms 139:13-16; Psalms 119:73; Isaiah 49:5; Jeremiah 1:5; 20: 17-18; Job 3:11, etc. We also see that God called individuals while still in the womb: (Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5). Let us revisit these and other biblical passages with the question of abortion specifically in mind, and once again learn from the pages of Scripture.

What Does The Bible Say?

- How do these biblical writers describe themselves in the womb? What can we infer about the unborn child through their descriptions?

Authors of the Bible	References	Descriptions/Implications of Unborn Baby
Job	<i>Job 10:8-11; 3:11, 16</i>	
David	<i>Psalms 139:13-16; Psalm 119:73</i>	
Isaiah	<i>Isaiah 49:5</i>	
Jeremiah	<i>Jeremiah 1:5; 20:17-18</i>	

- What can we learn about these descriptions of the child in the womb and children after birth from the following verses? How do these “before and after” descriptions affirm the status of the unborn child?

Child in the Womb		Child After Birth	
Reference	Description	Reference	Description
<i>Genesis 25:22</i>		<i>Luke 2:12, 16</i>	
<i>Luke 1:41, 44</i>		<i>Acts 7:19</i>	
<i>Job 3:16</i>		<i>2 Timothy 3:15</i>	
		<i>1 Samuel 15:3</i>	

¹¹ Zuck, Precious in His Sight, 71.

¹² Ibid.

3. Discuss David's confession "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5). What does this reveal about the status of the unborn child?

4. Exodus 21:22-25 states that punishment will be meted out to the offender if he causes a pregnant woman to give birth prematurely or inflicts serious injury on either the mother or the unborn child. What does this Mosaic instruction reveal concerning the status and value of unborn and premature babies?

5. Read Galatians 4:4 and Hebrews 2:17. In light of these, discuss Zuck's statement that "If the fetus is not a person, then Jesus Christ, when he was in Mary's womb was not a person" (Zuck 77).

6. What is implied about the value of human life – both born and unborn -- in the following verses? Psalms 127:3; John 1:13, Genesis 30:20.

7. According to the following scriptures, do you think God condemns abortion? Why? Genesis 30:1; 1 Samuel 1:11; Job 15:34 and Proverbs 30:16

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. How do people in your society or culture view abortion? What are the legal aspects of abortion in your country? Discuss the impact of abortion on society and on individual mothers in your country.

2. An article on Planned Parenthood, probably the world's most prominent promoter of abortions declares:¹³

“Reproductive freedom – the fundamental right of every individual to decide freely and responsibly when and whether to have a child – is a reaffirmation of the principle of individual liberty cherished by most people worldwide. It helps to ensure that children will be wanted and loved, that families will be strong and secure, and that choice rather than chance will guide the future of humanity.”

Discuss the assumptions and impact of this philosophy. Does it really lead to wanted and loved children and to strong and secure families?

3. Discuss the philosophy and implications of the following statement by Judith Thomson, a defender of abortion “rights.”¹⁴

“If [parents] have taken all reasonable precautions against having a child, they do not simply by virtue of their biological relationship to the child who comes into existence have a special responsibility for it. They may wish to assume responsibility for it, or they may not wish to.”

4. Do you think there are some legitimate reasons for abortion? What about rape? What about incest? What about advance knowledge of a profound deformity or incapacity?

5. What is your opinion on the following Pro-abortion arguments? (See *Precious in His Sight*, pages 78-81):

- Because Adam became “a living being” when God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7), a child becomes a living being when at birth he or she begins to breathe.

- Personhood begins at birth, because, though the fetus appears human, it is not a human being for it lacks consciousness.

¹³ “The Duty Free Family” in *Touchstone* (May, 2008), 19.

¹⁴ Judith Jarvis Thomson. “Intervention and Reflection: Basic Issues in Medical Ethics,” 5th ed., Ronald Munson ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1996), 69-80.

- The fetus tissue is part of the pregnant woman and, therefore, is not a separate person. This gives the woman the right to do with her body what she wishes.

- Abortions are a way of avoiding the bearing of unwanted children.

6. Do you know women who have had abortions? How would you counsel them?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 71-81.

Jesus' Attitude Toward Children

THE NEW Testament shows Jesus has high regard for children. Jesus' own words about children set the stage for this set of verses. Remember the many incidents involving children in the life of Jesus, e.g. the boy who offered Jesus the loaves and fishes (John 6), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7), and the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:28) are just a few examples. We may not know the names of these children but their very presence in the biblical record lets us know that they were significant to Jesus. Though it is often overlooked, we cannot deny the prominent role of children in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Jesus loved to have the children around him. Roy Zuck notes that "While few of the world's great religious leaders have had little regard for children, Jesus was different. Not only did he welcome them; he even used them to teach adults some essential spiritual lessons!"¹⁵

There is no better way to understand Jesus' attitude toward children than to reflect on how Jesus interacted with the children, what he said about them, and the lessons he taught about and through children. Let's see then how they fared.

What Does The Bible Say?

- List Jesus' words and actions with respect to children. (There is some redundancy of course, since many of the same instances are in more than one Gospel. Even so, there are often important small differences or nuances which provide additional insight.)

Reference	Jesus' Words or Actions
Matthew 18:2; Mark 9:36a; Luke 9:37	
Matthew 18:3; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:17	
Matthew 18:4	
Matthew 18:5; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48a	
Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:1-2	
Matthew 18:10	
Matthew 18:14	
Matthew 19:13; Mark 10:16; Luke 18:15	
Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16	
Matthew 10:15; Luke 18:17	

- For each spiritual truth Jesus taught the adults, list the things adults must do or avoid in regards to children (the first is done for you).

Spiritual Truths for Adults	References	Things to Do or Avoid in Regards to Children
Enter God's Kingdom	Matthew 18:1-3; Mark 9:33-34, 36; Luke 9:46-47; 17:1-2	Become like little children

¹⁵ Zuck, 201, quoting from Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 226.

Be great in God's eyes	<i>Matthew 18:4; Mark 9:35; Luke 9:48b</i>	
Demonstrate our welcome of Jesus	<i>Matthew 18:5; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48a</i>	
Avoid God's judgment	<i>Matthew 18:6-7; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:1-2</i>	
Identify with God's plans	<i>Matthew 18:10, 14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16</i>	
Avoid rebuke from Jesus	<i>Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 10-14; Luke 18:15-16</i>	

3. The following passages in the Synoptic Gospels record the disciples trying to hinder children from going near to Jesus. What was Jesus' reaction to the disciples? Note any differences between the three passages. Note also that each of these passages was followed by the account of the rich young man. Was there a connection between these teachings?

References	Jesus' Reaction	Jesus' Message
<i>Matthew 19:13-15</i>		
<i>Mark 10:13-16</i>		
<i>Luke 18:15-17</i>		

4. Identify the children whom Jesus healed and the type of sicknesses they were healed from:

References	Children	Sicknesses
<i>John 4:43-54</i>		
<i>Matthew 17:14-18; Mark 9:17-27; Luke 9:37-43</i>		
<i>Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:21, 35-43</i>		
<i>Luke 7:11-17</i>		
<i>Mark 5:41</i>		

Key Insights:

Biblical Themes/Principles:

Reflection Questions:

1. Contrast the *attitudes* of Jesus with the pastors and church leaders you know today. Are their attitudes more like the disciples or like Jesus? Why? Give examples. Which of Jesus' *actions* are common and which are not in your culture today? Give examples.
2. Discuss your own interpretation(s) of what was Jesus teaching His disciples, who were striving for position and greatness, about the Kingdom of God by placing the child in the midst? How can we apply this principle in our Church context today? How do Jesus' attitudes toward children reflect and illustrate the "Upside Kingdom?"
3. Read Mark Chapter 9 verses 33 through 48, *leaving out* verses 38-41. Do you see the continuity of the subject matter? Does this give you a different understanding of the warnings in verses 42-48? (Hint: Do you think the disciples might have been uncomfortable with the lesson of the child in the midst, and have been trying to "change the subject?" Notice too how quickly it seems that the disciples forgot the lesson of the child in the midst (by verse 13 of the next chapter, they were rebuking mothers who were bringing their children to Jesus!)
4. In Matthew 21:16, the children were praising Jesus, shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David," and this time it was the chief priests and the teachers of the law who were indignant. Why were they indignant? Jesus then asked them, "Have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?'" Discuss how Jesus was interpreting the passage from Psalms 8.
5. Are there opportunities for children to request for prayers – or to pray -- in your cell groups or prayer meetings? Do children have opportunities to respond to altar calls for healing, etc., in your Sunday School or children's church? Why or why not?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 201-216.

SECTION 2

Spiritual Openness of Children

MANY ADULTS say that children are incapable of accepting Christ and comprehending spiritual truths. We question their spiritual maturity and perception. We join the chorus with most adults saying, “Don’t try to win a child to Christ; wait till he is older and is more capable of making an intelligent decision.”¹⁶

As we will see later, it is well established that most people make their first significant faith decisions between the ages of 4 and 14. George Barna, the well-known researcher on faith and the Church in America, states that: “if people do not embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior before they reach their teenage years, the chance of their doing so at all is slim.”¹⁷

In this Section, we will explore the spiritual openness of children and their capacity to understand the faith. That they have such capacity will be clear. We will also see that God sometimes deployed children for special tasks, and often used ministry by or through children to influence trust and faith in adults.

¹⁶ Zuck, 18 quoting from Frank G. Coleman, *The Romance of Winning Children* (Cleveland: Union Gospel Press, 1967), 9-10.

¹⁷ George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, California: Regal, 2003), 34.

WE HAVE already had some close encounters with children of numerous backgrounds in the Bible. As we proceed, we will be provoked to ask: “Who, in fact, is the child?”

One particular child who would interest us all is the one whom Jesus carried in His arms in the midst of a serious theological argument (Matthew 18:1-6; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48). “Was the child a boy or a girl?” “How old was he or she?” “What did that child do that ‘qualified’ him or her to be picked by Jesus?” “Was he or she extra gifted and outstanding?” “What were his or her ‘connections?’”

And as we move from the individual child to the crowd, once again we will be prompted to ask: “Who were those ‘little ones’ that believed in Jesus and enjoyed His special protection (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:36)?” “Were they infants, toddlers, preschoolers or preteens?” “Where did these LITTLE ones acquire the ‘BIG’ wisdom to grasp the ‘complex’ salvation Truth that was supposedly understood only by ‘BIG’ people?”

This Study shows that children in the Bible come in all shapes and sizes. God uses many of them without regard for their status or any other qualification. Without undermining the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross, children “qualify” in God’s sight simply for being the way they naturally are! A study into the original Hebrew and Greek meanings would further attest this truth.¹⁸ This Study also aims to show that the Bible does not set a definitive “age of accountability” where children’s salvation or contribution to the Kingdom is concerned.

Prayerfully, by the end of this Study, we would move from the small question of “Who is the child?” to the BIG question: “Am I [being] the child?”

What Does The Bible Say?

- I. Who is the child in these OT passages? Can you identify his/her age group as revealed from the original meanings used in reference to them?

Reference	Contents	Hebrew/Greek Meanings	Child’s Name	Possible Age
Exodus 2:8	“And the <i>girl</i> went and got the baby’s mother.”	<i>Alamah</i> (the feminine of <i>Elem</i>) – young woman of the age of puberty or a virgin.	Miriam (when she rescued her brother, Moses)	
1 Samuel 2:18	“But Samuel was ministering before the Lord - a <i>boy</i> wearing a linen ephod.”	<i>Na’ar</i> - a boy (as active), from the age of infancy to adolescence; by implication, a servant.	Samuel	
1 Samuel 17:14	“David was the <i>youngest</i> . The three oldest followed Saul”	<i>Qatan</i> or <i>qaton</i> (verb) – to be small or insignificant.	David	
1 Samuel 17:56	“Find out whose son this <i>young man</i> is.”	<i>Elem</i> – a young person of marriageable age.	David (when he killed Goliath)	

¹⁸ I am indebted to Zuck for the comprehensive research on the Hebrew and Greek references for children in this study. All the Hebrew and Greek terms here were taken from *Precious in His Sight*, pages 149-158.

2 Kings 5:2	"...bands ...had gone out and had taken captive a <i>young girl</i> from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife."	Na'arah – a marriageable girl.		
1 Chronicles 22:5	"My son Solomon is young and inexperienced..."	Na'ar – inexperienced, not accepted in community as a leader. (Na'ar has a wide range of meanings and age groups).	Solomon	Non-specific
Jeremiah 1:6-7	"I do not know how to speak; I am only a <i>child</i> ." ¹⁹	Na'ar – inexperienced, one whose authority was not yet accepted in the community.	Jeremiah	
Psalms 8:2	"From the lips of <i>children</i> and <i>infants</i> you have ordained praise because of your enemies..."	Otel – baby; used as a synonym for "children" here. Yoneg – nursing or suckling infant.	Non specific	Below 1 yr.
Isaiah 7:14 cf. Matthew 1:23	"The <i>virgin</i> will be with child and will give birth to a son..."	Alamh (the feminine of Elem) – young woman of the age of puberty or a virgin.		
Isaiah 11:6	"...a <i>little child</i> will lead them."	Qatan or qaton (verb) – to be small or insignificant.	Non specific	Non-specific
Isaiah 11:8b	"...the <i>young child</i> put his hand into the viper's nest."	Gamul – a weaned child. Gamal (verb) – to be complete, to ripen.		2 to 3 years

2. Who is the child in these NT passages? Can you identify his/her age group as revealed from the original meanings used in reference to them?

Reference	Contents	Hebrew/Greek Meanings	Child's Name	Possible Age
Matthew 11:25	"...you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to <i>little children</i> ."	Nepios – a baby, young child or minor.		Non-specific
Matthew 18:2-5; cf Mk 9:36-37; Lk. 9:47-48	"He called a <i>little child</i> and had him stand among them"	Paidion – small children; conveys a feeling of affection		

¹⁹ According to Zuck, Jeremiah was "incorrectly rendered a 'child' in the NIV, 153.

<i>Matthew 19:13-14;</i> <i>cf Mark 10:13-15; Luke 18:16-17</i>	“Then <i>little children</i> were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them...Let the <i>little children</i> come to me.”	<i>Paidion</i> – small children; conveys a feeling of affection		
<i>Matthew 18:6;</i> <i>cf Mark 9:42;</i> <i>Luke 17:2</i>	“But if anyone causes one of these <i>little ones</i> who believe in me to sin...”	<i>Mikron</i> – small in amount, size or significance		
<i>John 6:9</i>	“Here is a <i>boy</i> with five small barley loaves and two small fish....”	<i>Paidarion</i> – little boy or youngster		

- Read Matthew 18:6 (“these little ones who believe in me”), and Mark 9:36 (they were apparently young enough to be held in Jesus’ arms).
 - Do these verses suggest that little children can come to Christ for salvation?
 - What are some reasons why children seem so equipped to respond to spiritual truths? (See Zuck p. 21 for a discussion on this).
- What (if anything), do the following texts suggest about an “age of accountability?”²⁰ Explain your reasoning in each case.

Reference	Observations	Implication for Age of Accountability
<i>Deuteronomy 1:39</i>	“And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad--they will enter the land.”	
<i>Isaiah 7:15-16; Jeremiah 19:4-5</i>	Note implications that children are the “innocents.”	
<i>Jonah 4:11</i>	To whom does those “who do not know their right hand from their left” refer?	
<i>Nehemiah 8:2-3</i>	Who are the “others who could understand?”	
<i>I Corinthians 13:9-11</i>	“When I was a child, I spoke as a child.,,”	

²⁰ For further reflection on this topic, see “Biblical Perspectives on Developmental Grace” (Chapter Four) by Klaus Issler in *Children’s Spirituality*, Donald Ratcliff, senior ed. (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2004).

John 9:20-21	"Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself."
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5. Many verses in the Bible state that everyone is born with a sin nature inherited from Adam e.g. Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3. How does this truth rule out any need for the "age of accountability?"

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. In his classic work *Christian Nurture*, Horace Bushnell states that a child of believing parents should "grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise."²¹ Do you agree or disagree? Why? (For a good discussion of this issue, see Zuck p. 241).
2. How much do you know about the child that Jesus placed in the midst of the disciples (Matthew 18:2-5; Mark 9:36-37; Luke 9:47-48) from your study above? What makes the child here so powerful as a starting point for theological discussions in Child Theology today?
3. In several incidences where children were mentioned or used in significant ways, viz., the boy who gave his 5 loaves and 2 fishes (John 6:9), why weren't their names mentioned? Consider the poor widow who gave away her last "two very small copper coins" (Luke 21:2). What parallel Kingdom Truths can you draw from these two incidences?

²¹ Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1875), 10.

4. How does the question “Who is the child?” make a difference in the way we relate to children, our colleagues, subordinates or members in our church? Why?

5. How does understanding “Who is the child?” vital in understanding Jesus’ instruction to Nicodemus: “...no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3).

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 21, 149-158, 238-241.

Klaus Issler, “Biblical Perspectives on Developmental Grace” in *Children’s Spirituality*, Donald Ratcliff, senior ed., Chapter Four.

Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, page 10-32.

Appendix on Hebrew and Greek meanings for references on children.

The Capacity of Children to Understand the Faith

IT IS not only God’s love and care for children that are striking in the Bible. We also see that God has a very high regard for their ability to understand the faith and to participate in His redemption activities. Throughout the Bible, young people are encouraged to influence their communities by maintaining personal purity, for example, by obeying God’s word (Psalms 119:9), by being exemplary in their speech, love, and faith (1 Timothy 4:12), and to pursue godly virtues (2 Timothy 2:22). Indeed, the conduct and moral standards for children differ very little for children and for adults.

Contrary to what adults think, children can grasp spiritual truths easily, they can “sense the guilt of sin”²² understand what Jesus has done for them and what it takes to receive Jesus. “A child of five, if properly instructed, can as truly believe and be regenerated as any adult.”²³

What Does The Bible Say?

1. Review the following scriptures. State the event or activity in which the children were participating. What do these events suggest about the ability of children to understand the faith and participate in the religious activities of the community?

Reference	Event/Activity	Implications
Deuteronomy 31:12		
Joshua 8:34-35		
Nehemiah 12:43		
2 Timothy 3:15		

2. What do the following verses suggest about the sensitivity or openness (or inherent transcendence) of young children regarding spiritual things?

References	Implications
Psalms 22:9-10	
Psalms 71:5-6, 17	
Matthew 11:25	
Matthew 21:15-16	
Luke 1:15	
Acts 26:4	

3. List the things God commanded the Israelite parents to teach their children in the following Deuteronomy passages. What does this reveal about the ability of children to understand spiritual truths?

²² Zuck, Precious in His Sight, 18.

²³ Zuck, 18, quoting from Frank G. Coleman, *The Romance of Winning Children* (Cleveland: Union Gospel Press, 1967), 9-10.

Deuteronomy Passages	God's Commandments to Israelite Parents /Implications
4:9-10	
6:4-9	
11:18-21	
31:12-13	
32:46	

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Study the scriptures and find at least 3 events or activities (other than those noted above), in which children participate in religious festivals or activities along with adults.

2. Note in Exodus 12:26 and Joshua 4:6 that it is not *if* your children ask, but *when* your children ask “what do these . . . mean.” To what extent are children expected to participate in the activities of the faith in your church, culture or society? How can children today be encouraged to participate and even initiate faith discussions in the home or church? How can we encourage children today to ask about matters of the faith?

3. Read the following statement concerning “children’s church” by James Montgomery Boice²⁴:

“Children’s sermons might distract people from the worship of God. They are meant to involve children in the worship service by offering something appropriate to their age. But the effect may be to focus the attention of the adults on the children rather than upon God. . . Children’s sermons may also contribute to “dumbing down” of the Gospel message. The goal for our children should be to bring them up to the level of the adults -- that is, to enable them to begin to function on an adult level in their relationships to God. But what we have succeeded in doing instead is to bring the adults down to the level of the children.”

²⁴ James Montgomery Boice, “I Don’t Do Children’s Sermons” in *Modern Reformation Magazine* at <http://articles.christiansunite.com>.

- Do you do “children’s church” in your church?

 - Do you feel it contributes to the participation of the children, or does it tend to “dumb down” the message of the Gospel for children? Discuss.
4. On page 21 of *Precious in His Sight*, Zuck gave 3 reasons why children are so equipped to respond to spiritual truths, viz.:
- Their dependency and trust

 - Their sensitivity to sin

 - Their loving nature

In your experience with children in your culture, can you think of any other reasons besides these?

5. Dr. Vinay Samuel has said, “Children are born with transcendence. While they are born into risk, children recognize transcendence. Yet if they are not immediately invited into the kingdom . . . if they do not experience and enjoy the realities of kingdom, they will lose that sense of transcendence.”²⁵ What is your understanding of transcendence? Do you agree that children inherently have it? Why? How is it that they can lose it? Do we, adults, also have it, or have we lost all sense of transcendence?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 17-22.

Wess Stafford, *Too Small to Ignore*, pages 212.

Vinay Samuel, “Some Theological Perspectives on Children at Risk” in *Transformation* (Vol. 14, No. 2: April/June 1997), page 27.

²⁵ Vinay Samuel, “Some Theological Perspectives on Children at Risk” in *Transformation*. (Vol. 14, No. 2. April/June 1997). 27.

God Uses Children for Special Tasks

THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE, we see God entrusting special truths to children or using them as His messengers or instruments. Dr. Wess Stafford, the President of Compassion International, likes to say that often when God had something REALLY important to do – something that He couldn’t entrust to adults, He used children instead. Sometimes, he says, “God seemed to pause, rub his hands together, smile warmly, and say, ‘I need someone really powerful for this task. I know—I’ll use a child.’”²⁶ “For example,” he says, “think of how different things would be, for example, if Moses’ sister, Miriam – just a child herself – had not rescued Moses from the Nile (Exodus 2)! Or think when God needed to get a stern message across to Eli, He confidently entrusted that message to a very young Samuel (1 Samuel 3). How about the young captive servant girl, who knew how God was using Elisha, and urged Naaman, the powerful Syrian General, to go to him for healing (2 Kings 5:1-3). All are remarkable examples of God valuing children enough to deploy them for special tasks in His dealing with His people.

What then is the place of children in this turbulent 21st Century world? What is God’s plan for children in the family, community and the church - His Kingdom?

What Does The Bible Say?

1. Review the following scriptures and discuss how God used the children for special tasks. Note the particular ability, quality or responsiveness needed by the child to do the task:

Reference	How God Used Children	Particular Ability/Quality Needed
2 Kings 5:1-3		
Psalms 8:2		
Mark 9:33-37		
John 6:5-13		

2. What were the special tasks God gave to children in these verses? What important lessons do you see in His entrusting these matters to children?

Reference	Children	Age	Spiritual Tasks/Lessons
1 Samuel 2:11; 3:1-20	Samuel		
2 Kings 5:1-3	Naaman’s servant girl		
2 Kings 11:21; 12:2	Joash		
2 Kings 22:1-2; 2 Chronicles 34:3	Josiah		

²⁶ Wess Stafford, *Too Small to Ignore* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2005), 212.

3. Children are sometimes used in special ways to further God’s Kingdom. Discuss the “mission” component in the following verses – that is, to bring others to faith. Can you identify other similar examples in the Bible? Does God use children in the same way today?

Reference	Children as Resources for Mission
2 Kings 5:4-6; 13-17	
1 Kings 17:19-24	
John 6:8-14	

4. Identify the special tasks which God assigned to the following children. Describe briefly the outcome or impact of their assignments:

Reference	Child	Tasks	Outcome/Impact
Genesis 22:6-12	Isaac	Used as a vessel to test his father, Abraham’s faith and love for God	A type of Christ that points people to God
Genesis 37:5-11,46; 45:5-8	Joseph		
Exodus 2:4-10	Miriam		
2 Kings 5:2-3	Naaman’s servant girl		
2 Kings 22:1; 23:3; 2 Chron. 34:1-7	Josiah		
Esther 2:17; 4:15-16; 7:3	Esther		
Jeremiah 1:4-10	Jeremiah		

5. What is the meaning of the name “Ishmael?” What does the story of Ishmael tell us about God’s concern for children (Genesis 16 and 21)? Did God keep the promise made to his mother Hagar (Genesis 21:18)? How?

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Why do you think God used children instead of adults in accomplishing certain tasks? In what ways are children unique from adults when accomplishing His tasks? Have you seen Him use children in your church or community?
2. When Jesus multiplied the 5 loaves and 2 fishes (given by the boy) to feed the multitude in John 6, what kind of impact do you think it made upon the boy in that incident? What kind of impact would it make upon you if you were among the crowd of hungry people?
3. What is the most common characteristic we know about Joseph from the many chapters about his life in Genesis? What same characteristics might we pray for in our own children today?
4. Apparently, God will use young people for special tasks in the future. What do you think it might mean in Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 that “the young men will dream dreams?”
5. Consider the phrase “Now I know...” used by Naaman in 2 Kings 5:15, and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:24. What is the significance of that phrase (Hint: Think what evangelism and missions are all about)? How was children featured in each of these passages, and what lessons or insights do you see?
6. If a child (perhaps your own) says to you that God has spoken to him/her to do a certain thing or make a certain decision, what would be your reaction? Why? Discuss the appropriate steps to take in this situation in light of the above discussions.
7. As discussed, children often responded spontaneously to God when given a chance to serve Him. Are children in your family, church or community given opportunities to do His work? If not, why? How does the participation of children in God’s work enhance the life of the church in your culture?

For Further Exploration:

Dan Brewster, *Child, Church and Mission*, pages 29-31.

Keith J. White, "A Little Child Will Lead Them – Rediscovering Children at the Heart of Mission" at <http://www.childtheology.org>.

God Uses Children to Influence Adults

Dr. Wess Stafford writes:

So far as we see in reading the Gospels, Jesus never admonished children to become more grown-up. He did, however, exhort grownups to become more like children (Mark 10:15). How often have you heard an exasperated parent (maybe yourself!) growl at a child through clenched teeth, “Would you just grow up?!” Jesus said the opposite to His adult followers: “Would you please grow down?” That is what it will take for you to enter my Kingdom.”²⁷

Apparently, just like we see today, there were some times when adults just didn’t “get it.” There is a remarkable pause in Jesus teaching about some very grown up things in Matthew 11. In the midst of the teaching, Jesus seemed to stop with wonder and amazement and exclaimed, “Father, I praise you that you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, but you have revealed them to little children” (verse 25). What was it, do you think, that God had actually hidden from the wise, but revealed to the little children?

Why did God use children to teach Kingdom Truths? Who are His “target” audience, if not adults? As Keith White has similarly expressed, “What if we miss the whole idea of Kingdom theology, missions and church?” simply because we, as adults, have “misheard or neglected God’s revealed teaching about children and childhood?”²⁸

The truth of the matter is God uses children to teach adults. This theme should provoke us all to take on a fresh perspective of spirituality and ministry. As we sit at the Master’s feet and open our hearts to these little ones, we will learn the “secret things” of the Kingdom.

What Does The Bible Say?

- Children are widely featured in the Gospels. State how Jesus used the ministry to/with children to influence adults:

Reference	How Jesus Used Children to Influence Adults
Mark 5:37, 40b	
Mark 9:23, 24	
Matthew 19:13	
Mark 10:13	
Luke 18:15	

- What are the Kingdom Truths adults are to learn from children in these passages of Scripture? Identify the contexts of these teachings for accurate interpretation. Can you cite other passages in the Bible where God used children to teach adults His Truths?

Reference	Context	Kingdom Truths Learnt from Children
Psalms 8:2		
Isaiah 9:6		
Isaiah 49:15, 16		

²⁷ Stafford, Too Small to Ignore, 211.

²⁸ Ibid.

Isaiah 66:13		
Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2:12, 23		
Malachi 4:6		
Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21		
Matthew 17, Mark 9-11; Luke 9-19		
Luke 19:35		
John 3:5-7		

3. From these child related words or phrases in the Pauline Epistles, study the contexts and identify the Kingdom Truths or message that Paul wanted to teach the adults. Some are done for you:

Reference	Child-Related Words/Phrases	Kingdom Truths/Message
Romans 8:15, 16, 23	“we cry ‘Abba Father;’ “we are God’s children;” “our adoption as sons.”	Sonship; redemption; adoption
1 Cor. 13:11	“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.”	
2 Cor. 6:18	“I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters...”	
Galatians 4:5-7	“God sent his Son;” “no longer a slave, but a son”	Redemption; sonship (heirs)
Ephesians 4:14	“no longer be infants, tossed back and forth...blown here and there...”	
Philippians 2:15	“children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation...shine like stars”	We are witnesses of a holy God to a sinful world.
Colossians 3:20	“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”	
1 Thess. 5:5	“sons of the light and sons of the day”	
1 Timothy 2:15	“women will be saved through childbearing...”	
2 Timothy 3:15	“from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures.”	
Titus 1:6	“a man whose children believe”	
Philemon 10	“my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.”	

4. In the days of Israel where “the word of the Lord was rare” and “there were not many visions” (1 Samuel 3:1), God chose young Samuel to reveal His will for the nation” (1 Samuel 3:1-21)? Why do you think God choose Samuel? How did God use young Samuel to influence the adults in his days?

5. Joseph was a boy captive who became Prime Minister. What spiritual truths about children and childhood can we learn from his life story (see Genesis 37:13-36; 39:20-23; 41:1-44)?

6. Amongst all the 8 sons of Jesse, God chose the youngest i.e. David the shepherd boy and anointed him to be the next king of Israel. What did the prophet Samuel as well as David’s father and older brothers learn about God’s ways of accomplishing His will (see 1 Samuel 16:7, 11-13)?

7. In the story of David and Goliath, David’s oldest brother (Eliab) “burned with anger” at David for attempting to confront the giant (1 Samuel 17:28). Further, King Saul initially doubted David’s ability because he was “only a boy” (v.33). Goliath too, disdained David as “only a boy” (v.42). What spiritual truths did Eliab, Saul and the Philistines learn from young David’s victory?

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Why did Jesus use the child phrase “You must be born again” when pointing Nicodemus to the Kingdom of heaven (John 3:16)? What is the lesson that Jesus was trying to teach the adults who want to enter the Kingdom?

2. Jesus told His disciples to “change and become like little children” or they “will never enter the Kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). What are the “changes” that Jesus is expecting from the disciples? In this context, are these changes possible without the influence of the little children?

3. Jesus was intentional in using children to teach adults in His ministry. Matthew said Jesus “called” a little child and Mark and Luke mentioned Jesus “took” a little child (Matthew 18:2; Mark 9:36a; Luke 18:16). Is your community intentional in using children to influence adults? How can the Church be more intentional in using children to influence adults?

4. Consider the boy with the 5 loaves and 2 fishes (John 6:8-13) who helped Jesus feed the 5,000. Imagine that you were amongst the crowd that day. What spiritual truths might you have learned as an adult from this incident? What spiritual truths might you have missed had Jesus used an adult rather than a boy to provide for the miracle?

5. Give examples from your own community of how adults (believers and non-believers) are dramatically transformed because of the influence of children.

6. Give examples of how you have seen God used children to minister to adults, or to encourage, or stimulate faith in adults.

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 204-216.

Keith J. White, “A Little Child Will Lead Them” at <http://www.childtheology.org>.

Children as Signs of the Coming Kingdom

DR. KEITH White notes that throughout the OT while children are the first to suffer when sin, deceit, war, and famine affect a tribe or city, they are also “seen as a sign of God’s blessing.” He writes, for example, of the great insight in Isaiah 11:6 where the Messianic Kingdom is portrayed thus:²⁹

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.

A child leading! What a triumphant picture of a new world order! Where once children were often victimized in an “urban, war-torn, consumer market-dominated jungle of today,”³⁰ now they will enjoy the blessed freedom to roam and play even as wolves and lambs live peaceably with each other. They will lead – signifying a new and prominent role.

Isaiah also prophesied that the new earth will never again witness an infant “who lives but a few days” (Isaiah 65:20). God will remove all sorrows and sufferings. Indeed, children as “signs” point us not only to the Messianic Kingdom but also help us understand our mission on earth.

This study and the reflection questions may challenge us to think more “theologically” than other studies. It is deep, but immensely significant and rewarding.

What Does The Bible Say?

1. Reflect on how children or a child is related to biblical “signs” in the following passages. What are the circumstances provoking the sign in each instance? Discuss the significance.

Reference	Circumstances/Significance
Joshua 4:6	
Isaiah 7:14	
Isaiah 9:6	
Luke 2:12	
Luke 2:33	
Luke 2:38	
John 3: 1-8	
Revelation 12:1,2	

2. Reflect on Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6 again. Discuss why God used a child to reveal His plan of salvation to mankind, rather than some more “predictable” indicator (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6). What is the implication for things that are “small” or “insignificant” in God’s Kingdom?³¹

²⁹ Keith J. White, “A Little Child Will Lead Them,” at <http://www.childtheology.org>. I am indebted to Dr. Keith White for many of these insights about the child as a “sign.”

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Question adapted from Keith White, “A Little Child Will Lead Them.”

3. Reflect similarly again on Luke 2:12. Why did God use a tiny baby as a “sign” of His Incarnation? What does this reveal about the character of God?
4. What is the significance of the word ‘child’ being repeated again and again in the Incarnation narratives of both Matthew and Luke?

Reference	Significance of the Child
<i>Matthew 1:18, 23</i>	
<i>Matthew 2:8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21.</i>	
<i>Luke 1:31, 36, 42, 59, 62, 66, 76, 80</i>	
<i>Luke 2:5, 17, 27, 34, 38, 40</i>	

5. What is your understanding of the phrase “The kingdom of God [or heaven] belongs to such as these [the children] (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16)?” In what sense(s) does the Kingdom belong to children?
6. In Isaiah 11, the Messianic Kingdom is vividly portrayed: “The wolf will live with the lamb...and a little child will lead them” (v.6). What is your interpretation of this verse? What does this verse suggest concerning the role of children in the future Messianic kingdom?

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Compare the narratives in Exodus 12 with that of Matthew 2:15, 16. What is the common thread? Discuss how children were the first martyrs for the foundation of the nation of Israel as well as the first martyrs for Christ.
2. Theologians commenting on the Kingdom of God often note that it is “already” and “not yet.” The Kingdom is already and manifested in every act of kindness done in Jesus’ name. At the same time, it is “not yet,” for many people do not believe, and there remains much evil and “incompleteness” in the world.

Reflect on how the child is also “already” and “not yet,” and how they both shed light on each other. List the similarities between the child and the Kingdom.

3. Theologians also refer to Christ’s Kingdom as the “Upside-Down Kingdom.”³² Remembering Jesus’ words that unless the disciples changed and became like a child, they would not enter the Kingdom, what does this say to you about an “upside-down Kingdom?”

4. The German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, says that children are “metaphors of hope.” What do you understand by this idea? How are children metaphors of hope?

5. “The child was put in the midst as a sign of the Kingdom of God but this is not the same as the presence of the Kingdom. The child is often a sign of hope but he or she can also be a sign by pointing to the darkness that is still waiting for the Kingdom, rather like the canaries taken down the mines to detect poisonous gases. Faith does not oblige us to be cheaply optimistic about every situation.”³³ Reflect and comment.

6. In what ways have you, the community and the Church underestimated the role and contribution of children? What can you, the community or the Church do to rectify this error?

For Further Exploration:

Keith J. White, “A Little Child Will Lead Them” at <http://www.childtheology.org>.

Jürgen Moltmann. *In The End – The Beginning* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), pages 2-18.

John Collier & Associates, *Toddling to the Kingdom*, page 15.

³² Donald Kraybill, *The Upside-Down Kingdom* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1978).

³³ John Collier & Associates, *Toddling to the Kingdom* (Pre-Publication: 2008), 15.

Should Infants be Baptized?

BAPTIZING INFANTS amongst the Roman Catholic and some Protestant churches is an aged-old tradition handed down to them through their forefathers. Whether it is for the purpose to “mark an individual’s entrance into the church” or “to serve as a sign and seal of the child’s participation in the covenant of grace,”³⁴ this ancient practice certainly deserves some in-depth discussions.

In *Precious in His Sight*, Zuck presents 4 major arguments for and 12 reasons against infant baptism. Did the Early Church practice infant baptism? Did infant baptism take place in the New Testament Church? What are the other biblical evidences for or against infant baptism?

What Does The Bible Say?

1. Did the Early Church practice infant baptism? Identify the following “households” that were saved and baptized in the book of Acts. Do you agree that these “whole households” include the presence of infants? If so, do these verses then support infant baptism?

Reference	Households that were Baptized
Acts 11:14	
Acts 16:14-15	
Acts 16:31	
Acts 16:32-34	
Acts 18:8	
1 Corinthians 1:14-16	

2. Consider Acts 16:31 in which Paul said to the jailer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.” What about the phrase “you and your children” in Acts 2:39? How do these verses support the position on the faith of parent/s substituting the faith of infants hence leading to infant baptism? In the same light, can the faith of the parent/s “sanctify” their children (1 Corinthians 7:14)? Why or why not?
3. What is your opinion of this statement: “...infant baptism in this age has the same significance as and replaces circumcision of the Old Testament, and is the seal of one’s being in the covenant people of God.” For a comprehensive discussion, read Zuck, pages 231-238.
4. Identify the people who were baptized in the Early Church. Are they adults or infants? Identify one common factor which “qualifies” them to be water- baptized?

³⁴ Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, 226.

Passages in Acts	People who were Baptized	Common Factor for Water Baptism
2:41		
8:12		
9:18		
10:44		
16:31-34		
18:8		
19:4-5		

5. Who were the recipients (adults or infants) of water baptism in Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16)? What is the biblical implication on the validity of infant baptism?

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Is infant baptism still being practiced in your culture and church community? What is the history behind this practice and why? What is your personal stand on this in light of scriptural truth?
2. From a biblical point of view, can infant baptism be equated as an act of regeneration? If yes, why? If not, should churches continue to practice infant baptism? Why or why not?

3. According to your knowledge and experience in your culture, what is percentage of adults who have been infant-baptized come to saving faith later in life? What do these statistics reveal concerning the validity of infant baptism?

4. In your opinion, should a person who has been infant-baptized undergo a “proper” water baptism after he has come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? Why or why not?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 226-238.

God’s Promises and Blessings for the Generations

God is a God of generations! His intent is that we will pass the torch of faith to the next generation. Psalms 78:4-7 reads: “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes ... which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds...”

The words “generation(s)” and related ideas occur frequently throughout Scripture. Here is a partial list:

- “generation” - 46 times (OT); 28 times (NT)
- “forefathers” – 84 times (OT); 15 times (NT)
- “you and your descendants” – 10 times (OT)
- “you and your children” – 10 times (OT); 1 time (NT)
- “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” – 13 times (OT); 4 times (NT)

Often the word “generation” is used in the context of genealogy or “historical account of a family or tribe”.³⁵ But, more significantly for us in this study, Scripture reveals that God’s reference to “generations” is often future-oriented and related to His covenantal blessings! Genesis 17:7 is only one of the many illustrations:

“I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.”

As the apostle Peter declares, God “has given us His very great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4). Adults may have tended to think that God’s promises and blessings were meant only for us. But the fact is that children were very often in God’s promises and blessings. When making a covenant with Israel, God intentionally included children as the next generation who would enjoy and perpetuate His blessings – even before they were born! Listen to one obvious example when Moses was preparing the Israelites to enter the Promised Land – “[God] will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the *fruit of your womb*, the crops of your land...” Deuteronomy 7:13).

God’s covenantal blessings for mankind have always included children from the beginning. This study will explore God’s concern for, and the promises He has made for the “next generation.”

What Does The Bible Say?

- I. Using short phrases, identify the covenantal promises of God involving children in these “you and your children” phrases. For accurate interpretation, be careful to read the passages in context by referring to the verses after and before:

Reference	“You and Your Children” Phrases	God’s Covenantal Promise Involving Children
Deuteronomy 4:40		Long life and inheritance of the Promised Land.
Deuteronomy 12:28		
Deuteronomy 30:2-3		
Deuteronomy 30:19-20		

³⁵ Herbert Lockyer, Sr., *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986).

Psalm 115:14

Isaiah 49:25

Acts 2:39-40

2. What are the warnings for both adults and children that are repeatedly mentioned in the above passages as conditions for enjoying God's promises?

3. In brief sentences, write down the promises God made about children in these verses. What are the conclusions or "lessons" you see from these promises?

Reference	God's Promises About Children	Conclusions or "Lessons"
Deuteronomy 7:12		God keeps His covenant of love to the children.
Genesis 6:18		
Deuteronomy 11:21		
Deuteronomy 30:9		
Psalm 25:12,13		
Psalm 37:25,26		
Psalm 112:1,2		
Proverbs 20:7		
Jeremiah 1:5		
Malachi 4:5,6		

4. Judges 2:10 states that "After that whole generation [of Joshua] had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Why did the generation after Joshua turn away from God despite God's pronouncement of generational blessings over them? What spiritual lessons can we learn from here?"

5. The psalmist declares: "...we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done" (Psalm 78:4). Share with your group one or two "praiseworthy deeds" and the "wonders" of God that you would like to tell your next generation.
6. Acts 2:39 states: "The promise is for you and your children..." What was the promise? Is this promise still relevant for today's children? What does this verse indicate concerning the status of children in the contemporary Church?

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Discuss God's promise concerning Ishmael in Genesis 21:18: "...I will make him into a great nation." To whom did God make this promise? Under what circumstances was this promise made? Did God keep that promise? How? What spiritual lessons can we learn from here?
2. As advocates and practitioners of children at risk, which of the above promises are most comforting to you? Which promises are difficult for you to accept? Why?
3. State one or two direct promises to children above which you believe may be key to the areas of your ministry to them.
4. Discuss what parents (especially pregnant mothers) can do to bless their unborn child – the "seed of the womb"? Share your personal experiences and the impact such blessings have had on the unborn child or the child in his/her adult years.

5. In Matthew 18:6, Jesus rebuked the adults for hindering the children from receiving God's blessings and causing them to sin. Can you identify any similar incidences in your culture? What are the spiritual consequences of these incidences in both the adults and the future generations?

6. Luke 1:50 states that "His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation." How then should we pray for the salvation of our present corrupt generation?

For Further Exploration:

Alemu Beeftu, *God Heard the Boy Crying* (Compassion International), pages 25-26.

Herbert Lockyer, Sr., *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986).

SECTION 3

Children in Biblical Families

FAMILIES COME in all shapes and sizes. Do you know that having children – “Godly offspring” – was the reason God created the institution of marriage (see Malachi 2:13-15)? Some societies highly value the extended family – the more aunts, uncles, cousins and other relations, the better. Other societies are more “nuclear” – there is less inter-generational contact, and less involvement of the extended family in daily activities, matters of discipline, and other social situations.

Generally, around the world, families are smaller today than in times past. In the 70s there were doom and gloom projections that the world would grow to **20 or even 50 billion people**. We wouldn't be able to feed everyone. There would be mass starvation, and not enough resources and energy to support even a modest standard of living.

It hasn't quite turned out that way. Fertility rates (the number of children per woman), have dropped dramatically not only in the more developed countries, but in the less developed countries as well. We know that Western families are typically smaller, but in fact, some 63 countries around the world have a fertility rate under the replacement rate.

Children come with all kinds of names.³⁶ Many people believe that a name can influence all of life. Some groups give their children ugly or unflattering names, to make them less appealing to the spirits of demons. My name, “Daniel,” means “God Judges” (or something like that!). My colleague, Siew Ling tells me that her name means “petite” and “active” – a pretty good description of her I'd say, even now as an adult (but she says, it may mean something different depending on what Chinese characters are used! Whew!). And names differ widely from place to place. If you are born in Africa, you might be named Abeni, Chika, or Khamisi. If you are born in Poland, your first name may be Balbina, Dobieslaw or Sergiusz. In Korea, the given name may be Moon, Shin, Soo, or Sun. In China, Wei, Xia, and Xiang are common given names.

No matter where you are born there will be sibling rivalries. They are as ancient as that between Cain and Abel. Most are harmless; others can be life-long and even have fatal consequences.

Our studies in this section will explore examples of biblical families – names, size, extended families and rivalries. It's all there. Each of these will lend themselves to some very interesting reflection opportunities. Let's get started!

³⁶ There are many fascinating websites on names. This one has lots of information about baby's names around the world: <http://www.babynames.org.uk/>.

The Naming of Children

HAVE YOU considered what a remarkable thing it is that the name we give our children is the name that God will use – He will use whatever name we give our children. The very same names are the names which (hopefully) will be written down in heaven.

Interestingly, even in the secular Western culture, the most common names even today are biblical names. A popular website³⁷ shows that the three most popular names for boys in America in 2006 were (in order) Jacob, Michael, and Joshua. Matthew, Daniel and Andrew were also in the top 10.

How should one name a child? Today, it is considered trendy to name a child after a famous person whom the parents idolize e.g. a famous author or celebrity. Some parents name their children after a relative or even themselves! Just like in the Bible, there are parents who name their children after nature (e.g. flowers), places (cities, towns, and countries), an event (e.g. tsunami, el Niño), colors, days, months and gemstones.

It was common for some illiterate culture to name their children after domestic objects (e.g. plate, scissors) or animals (e.g. cat, dog, cow). In the past, some children were also given derogatory names that describe their negative physical appearance or disability (e.g. dumb, deaf, limping leg).

We will find that parents in the Bible who fear God chose names that were deliberate and purposeful for their children. And children in the Bible were expected to live up to their names to fulfill God's plans for their lives.

What Does The Bible Say?

- When are children named in the Old and New Testament? Identify the children and the time they were named:

Reference	Child	When Was the Child Named
Genesis 29:32	Reuben	
Genesis 35:18	Benjamin	
I Samuel 1:20	Samuel	
Luke 1:59	John	
Luke 2:21	Jesus	

- Many times in Scripture, we are told of the meaning of the child's name. What are the meanings given for the names of these children? Identify the person/s who named them:

Reference	Child's Name	Named By:	Meaning
Genesis 3:20	Eve	Adam	
Genesis 4:1	Cain		
Genesis 16:11	Ishmael		
Genesis 17:17; 18:12-13; 21:3	Isaac		
Genesis 25:25	Esau		
Genesis 25:26	Jacob		

³⁷ <http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/> (Accessed April 29, 2008). Note: There are similar websites for most common non-western names.

Genesis 29:9-10	Rachel		
Genesis 30:24	Joseph		
Genesis 38:27-30	Zerah & Perez		
Exodus 2:10	Moses		
I Samuel 1:20	Samuel		
I Samuel 4:21-22	Ichabod		
I Samuel 25:3-11	Nabal		
2 Samuel 12:24	Solomon		
I Chronicles 4:10	Jabez		
I Chronicles 7:21-23	Beriah		
Job 42:14-15	Jemimah, Keziah and Keren- Happuch		
Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23	Immanuel		
Hosea 1:4-10	Jezreel		
Luke 1: 13, 59	John		
Luke 1:26-31	Mary		

3. Some people in the Bible had their names changed. Having a name change in the Bible was usually a very significant event, indicating the change not only of the name but of the character of the person. Discuss the new meanings and any transformations that took place after the following name changes:

Reference	Name Change	New Meanings/Transformations Observed
Genesis 17:5	Abram to Abraham	
Genesis 17:15	Sarai to Sarah	
Genesis 32:28	Jacob to Israel	
Genesis 41:45	Joseph to Zaphenath-Paneah	
2 Kings 23:34	Eliakim to Jehoiakim	
Mark 3:16; Mark 16:18	Simon to Peter	
Acts 4:36	Joseph to Barnabas	

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. How are children named in your country/culture? Describe the process of choosing and determining names in your culture. Who chooses the names of children – the father, mother, in-laws, extended family or pastors? Are names chosen to challenge or provide life direction for the children?
2. Discuss the meaning of your original given names. If you know it, share with your group the process and background of how your name was chosen for you as a baby. In what specific ways, positively or negatively, have your name impacted you as an adult?
3. Does your culture give derogatory names to their children? What is the historical and cultural background to this practice? To what extent is this practice a spiritual bondage?
4. Is it common for believers in your culture to adopt a Christian name after they become believers? Why? Do you agree with that practice? Describe the process of how believers change their names and the response from their community e.g. family, friends or colleagues.
5. Names (and nick-names) can have a powerful impact on a child right into adulthood. Have you given thought to providing a motivating, uplifting, or otherwise meaningful name to your children? As a spiritual leader or clergy, how do you influence young parents in your church to choose meaningful names for their children?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 63-67.

<http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/>

Family Membership and Size

“How do you define a family?” “What is the size of a ‘real’ family?” And what about homosexual couples seeking legal recognition as families? In the past, such questions do not arise. It was understood that a family consists of a father, mother, children and usually often live-in grandparents or other relatives.

Today it is hard to insist on only one definition of a family. As Zuck describes it aptly, “a family may consist of a divorced or never married mother and her child or children” or “an unmarried couple living together, with or without children” or “households with adopted children.”³⁸

God’s original definition of a family is far from what we hear or observe in the 21st Century. Most biblical families were complete with a father, mother, children, grandparents, in-laws and servants. They averaged 6.1 or more per family. Concubines and slave girls were considered part of the biblical families in view of their roles in bearing children.³⁹

What Does The Bible Say?

- Several verses in the Bible seem to suggest that having seven children was considered “ideal” and an indication of a special blessing from God. Write statements on the significance of having seven children as an ideal family in these passages:

Reference	Occasion	Statements on Having Seven Children
<i>Ruth 4:15</i>		
<i>1 Samuel 2:5</i>		
<i>Job 1:4</i>		
<i>Job 42:13</i>		
<i>Jeremiah 15:9</i>		

- Consider Solomon’s statement in Ecclesiastes 6:3: “A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a still born child is better off than he.”
 - What does this verse say concerning family size in the Bible?
 - What does having many children compare with acquiring properties and achieving prosperity in the Bible?
- Psalm 127:5 says: “Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gates.” Consider the list of selected fathers and the number of children in Table 1 of *Precious in His Sight*, pages 92 and 93. In what ways are these fathers “blessed”? How does family size play a role in being blessing to the men in the family?

³⁸ Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, 91.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

4. The following parents have only ONE child. Identify the context and write down your observations on the grief they suffer at the prospects of losing their child to a sickness or tragedy:

References	Incident	Observations on Parents' Grief
<i>1 Kings 3:16-28</i>		
<i>1 Kings 17:7-24</i>		
<i>2 Kings 4:1-7</i>		
<i>2 Kings 4:8-37</i>		
<i>Luke 8:40-42, 49-56</i>		
<i>Luke 7:11-17</i>		

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Does your culture encourage, determine or prohibit large families? Are there laws that control the gender or number of children in families?
 - If so, what is the minimum or maximum family size allowed? Why?
 - What are the historical roots behind these laws? What effects (psychological, emotional, sociological etc) do such laws have on parents, the children and society at large?
 - Can you think of one or two similar examples in the Bible? Identify the root causes behind this implementation of laws and the sufferings parents had to endure under such circumstances.

2. Discuss the effects of a “one-child policy” if practiced for more than one generation (Hint: think about impact on the “extended” family)?

3. Why do many modern couples delay having children, intentionally limit their family size, or even opt for childlessness today? Is such an attitude a rebellion against God's general command to "be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:22)? Give your reasons.

4. Some people feel that there are already too many people in the world, and each new child adds to the problem. Do you agree or disagree? What is your response to this perspective? Do you think your community or nation has too many children?

5. There are two prevailing points of view among Christians with respect to birth control. Discuss both the pros and cons of each in the Christian context. What is your position?
 - There are important factors which impact the number of children we should have and can care for, such as the couple's income, availability of time for child-rearing, job commitments etc. Each of these are legitimate factors necessitating birth-control.

 - Birth control is a hindrance to God's blessings and a lack of surrender to His Lordship and purposes. There are few legitimate reasons for using birth control.

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 91-94.

The Influence of Extended Families in Children’s Lives

GENERALLY, THE phrase “extended family” is used to refer to the traditional family units in conservative cultures such as in Asia or Africa. The extended family usually includes grandparents and grand children, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, and perhaps other family members. What about the role of the extended family in the more liberal and individualistic Western family?

Scripture reveals that extended families can play a vital role in the lives of the “immediate” families. Far from being perceived as “outlaws,” grandparents, relatives and in-laws were a blessing to their “immediate” families in Bible days. In some instances, extended families acted as adoptive parents to their relatives’ or in-laws’ children. For example, it has been suggested that Jacob adopted his grandchildren Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 21:11). Some grandparents even helped to shape the destiny of their nation through influencing their grandchildren to be kings.

As we scrutinize the Scripture once again, we may have to re-align our hearts and minds to what God has to say about grandparents, in-laws and relatives and their influence over our children and children’s children.

What Does The Bible Say?

1. What are the evidences in these verses that extended families were part and parcel of the “immediate” family? Identify the names of the members of the extended family and the roles they play e.g. grandfather, grandmothers, mother-in-law etc.:

Reference	Name and Role of Extended Family <i>(grandfather, grandmother, mother in-law etc)</i>	Evidences that Extended Family were Part of the “Immediate” Family
Genesis 27:46		
Genesis 31:27		
Genesis 46:7		
Exodus 18		
Judges 12:14		
Ruth 1:3-19		
Ruth 4:13-16		
1 Timothy 5:4		
2 Timothy 1:5		
Luke 4:38-39		

2. Grandparents in biblical times have a special influence over their grandchildren. What do these verses suggest concerning the roles and responsibilities of grandparents?

Reference	Roles and Responsibilities of Grandparents
Genesis 48:5,9	
Deuteronomy 4:9	
Psalms 78:5-6	
Psalms 103:17	
Proverbs 13:22a	
Ezekiel 37:25	
Joel 1:3	
1 Timothy 1:4	
2 Timothy 1:5	

3. Besides grandparents, in-laws and blood relatives, slaves and servants were another group of people who sometimes formed the extended family (“household”) in the Bible. Identify the following persons whose households included slaves or servants. List what you observe about these slaves or servants:

References	Master of the Household	Observations on Slaves (Servants)/Master Relationship
2 Samuel 12:17	David	Servants “stood beside” their master and cared for him
1 Kings 5:9	Hiram	Master took great care to provide food for his servants
Genesis 14:14		
Genesis 17:27		
Job 1:15-17; 31:13-15, 31		
Genesis 16:1		
Genesis 24:61		

4. What are some of the privileges of slaves and servants in the Bible?

Reference	Privileges of Slaves/Servants
Exodus 20:10; 23:12	
Deuteronomy 12:11-12, 18	
Exodus 23:12; Leviticus 22:11; Ecclesiastes 2:7	

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. What is your definition of “extended family” in your culture? Who are the members that officially make up a typical extended family?
2. Proverbs says that Grandchildren are “a crown to the aged” (Proverbs 17:6). Another saying is that “Grandchildren are God’s compensation for our growing old.” Grandchildren usually have a special place in their grandparents’ hearts. What are some common quotations about grandchildren in your culture? Are they negative or positive? What do these quotations say about the general perception of grandparents/grandchildren relationships?
3. In your culture, how are grandparents respected (or disrespected) in a typical family? What are the roles and responsibilities of grandparents? Discuss the hindrances that grandparents in your culture face in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.
4. In-laws are sometimes cynically referred to as “outlaws.” Why? From your observations, discuss the kind of problems commonly faced by in-laws. What are the root causes and how can families fulfill their God-given roles to in-laws and vice-versa?

5. Ruth is a classic example of a godly daughter-in-law who enjoyed both the favor of her in-laws as well as the special blessings of God despite the odds. What are the attitudes of Ruth that set her apart from most daughters-in-law today? Read the entire book of Ruth.

6. Maids or domestic helpers are very common in Latin, African and Asian homes. How are they treated? Discuss why maids/servants in your culture should or should not be considered as part of their master's extended family.

7. With the increasing dependence on live-in foreign maids/servants in some cultures, what can "immediate" families do to ensure that these foreigners are a blessing to their children and family as God intend them to be?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 95-104.

Children's Responsibilities toward Parents

IN THIS age where family units have been severely broken and many children estranged from their parents (even though they live under the same roof), it is easy to blame the parents for most family-related problems. Some think it is natural for children to rebel against their parents. While this may be true for children in broken or dysfunctional homes, the Bible makes it clear that God makes “demands” on the children as well as parents. Consistent with their age and understanding, God expects children to respond to the training and discipline of their parents, and to the moral teachings of the Bible. A godly home consists of both the parents and children fulfilling their God-given roles and responsibilities regardless of their circumstances.

Other than obeying their parents, what else is expected of children? Scriptures reveal at least nine specific responsibilities children are expected to fulfill in relation to their parents.

What Does The Bible Say?

- Identify the 9 responsibilities of children towards their parents in these verses:

Reference	9 Specific Responsibilities of Children
<i>1 Peter 1:14; Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20</i>	Obey their parents*
<i>Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Malachi 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:4</i>	Honor and respect their parents*
<i>Proverbs 13:13b; Hebrews 12:7-9</i>	
<i>Proverbs 7:1-5</i>	
<i>Deuteronomy 32:7</i>	
<i>Proverbs 3:5,7,9; 22:19</i>	
<i>Ephesians 5:1</i>	
<i>Proverbs 23:32; 1 Timothy 5:4-5, 16</i>	
<i>Genesis 4:2; 29:6; Exodus 2:16; 2 Kings 4:18; Jeremiah 7:18</i>	

* These 2 responsibilities are further discussed in a separate chapter.

- An undisciplined child is described as a “mocker” (Proverbs 13:1b; 15:12a) and one who “despises himself” (Proverbs 15:32a). Give some examples of undisciplined children in the Bible and the ways they mock and despise themselves.

3. Proverbs use different verbs and commands in relation to actions expected of them towards their parents' (especially their father's) instructions. In the following sets of verses, summarize these verbs and actions in short phrases. The first three are done for you.

Reference in Proverbs	Words Related to Father's Instructions	Specific Action Expected of Children
1:8; 4:1	Your father's instruction	Listen to
4:10	What I say	
4:20	My words	
5:1	My words of insight	
5:7; 7:24; 8:32	Me	
8:33	My instructions	
19:20	Advice	
22:17	The sayings of the wise	
23:22	Your father	
4:20; 7:24	What I say	Pay attention to
5:1	My wisdom	
22:17	The sayings of the wise	
5:7	From what I say	Do not turn aside
3:1	My teaching	
4:5	From [my words]	
1:8; 6:20	Your mother's teaching	
4:2	My teaching	
2:1	My words	
4:10	What I say	
10:8	Commands	
19:20	Instruction	
4:13	Instruction	
7:2	My teaching	
13:1	Father's instruction	
16:20	Instruction	
3:1; 4:4; 7:2	My commands	
2:1	My commands	
23:12	Instruction	
23:12	Words of knowledge	

4. What do the following verses say about the responsibilities of children in regards to their own faith and spiritual life?

Reference	Children's Responsibilities Concerning their Own Spiritual Life
<i>Psalm 148:12</i>	Join others in praising the Lord
<i>Ecclesiastes 12:1</i>	
<i>Proverbs 20:11</i>	
<i>Psalm 119:9</i>	
<i>1 Timothy 4:12</i>	
<i>2 Timothy 2:22</i>	
<i>Titus 2:6</i>	
<i>Exodus 12:26-27; 13:14-15</i>	

5. How do children in the Bible care for their parents/grandparents? What inferences can you make about how children today are to care for these relatives?

Reference	Children	How Children Cared for Parents/Grandparents
<i>1 Timothy 5:4-5, 16</i>	General	Taking care of them when they are widowed
<i>Proverbs 23:22</i>	General	
<i>Ruth 4:15</i>	Obed	
<i>Genesis 35:29</i>	Esau and Jacob	
<i>Genesis 50:7, 13-14</i>	Joseph and brothers	

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

- Roy Zuck says, "To be effective, discipline is two-sided; it must be given by parents, and it must be received by children."⁴⁰ In your culture, which side (parents or children) tends to fail in their responsibilities in discipline? What generally hinders/encourages a child from accepting discipline from their parents in your culture?
- What are other responsibilities, not mentioned above, that children in your culture practice to demonstrate their love and respect towards their parents? What hinders or encourages children from fulfilling their responsibilities towards their parents?
- Is it common for children in your culture to work with and for their parents? What kind of work or business enables children and parents to work together? Discuss the challenges, benefits and disadvantages of this practice.

⁴⁰ Zuck, Precious in His Sight, 165.

4. We have all seen very badly behaving young children. In your culture, are parents generally tolerant or strict in disciplining such misbehaving children? How do you think parents should deal with a young child (2-7 years) who throws a tantrum or is very disobedient?

5. Do you agree that (consistent with age and understanding) God's expectations regarding the behavior and morals of children are essentially the same as for adults? Why or why not? Support with Scripture.

6. How are children in your culture encouraged to nurture their faith? Are children encouraged to ask their parents about spiritual things? If not, why? What programs/activities/guidance does the Church in your community provide for families to help them nurture their children's spiritual life at home?

7. Of the 9 responsibilities of children listed above in, which are (were) the most difficult/easiest for you as a child to practise? If you have children of your own, which are the most difficult/easiest for your children to practise?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 159-168.

Biblical Contexts of Honoring and Obedience

HONOR, RESPECT and obedience towards parents is commanded in the Bible. Indeed, honoring our parents is one of the Ten Commandments: “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). This fifth commandment is the only one of the ten addressed specifically to children and it comes with a promise -- God promised that they “may live long in the land.” Likewise, Paul echoed this command and also the reason for the command -- “that it may go well with *you* and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2-3).

Honor and obedience go hand in hand. A child who disobeys his parents also dishonors them and vice-versa. The consequences of dishonoring and disobedience are serious and grave in the Bible. On the other hand, the rewards of honoring and obeying one’s parents are bountiful.

What Does The Bible Say?

1. How do children in the Bible honor their parents?

Reference	Children	Actions that Honor Parents
<i>Proverbs 17:6b</i>	General	
<i>Genesis 27:27</i>	Jacob	
<i>Genesis 50:1</i>	Joseph	
<i>1 Kings 19:20</i>	Elijah	
<i>Joshua 2:12-13</i>	Rahab	
<i>1 Samuel 22:3-4</i>	David	
<i>John 19:26-27</i>	Jesus	

2. List the actions that dishonor parents and their subsequent consequences as mentioned in the Bible:

Reference	Actions that Dishonor Parents	Consequences
<i>Exodus 21:17;</i> <i>Leviticus 20:9;</i> <i>Proverbs 20:20</i>		
<i>Proverbs 19:26;</i> <i>28:24</i>		
<i>Proverbs 30:11-</i> <i>14; 20:20</i>		
<i>Proverbs 30:17</i>		

Ezekiel 22:7-12

1 Timothy 1:9

3. Write down Jesus' words about honoring one's parents:

Reference	Context	Jesus' Words
Matthew 15:4		
Mark 7:10		
Matthew 15:5-6		
Mark 7:11-13		
Matthew 19:19		
Mark 10:19		
Luke 18:20		

4. Proverbs gives many examples of the good things that happen to children who are open and obedient to their parents' teaching. List the good things children experience when they obey their parents:

Reference from Proverbs	Good Things Obedient Children Experience
2:5	
2:9	
2:20	
3:2	
4:10	
4:11-12	
4:22	
5:2	
6:23-24	
16:20	
19:16	
19:20	
22:21	

5. What did these children do to demonstrate their obedience to their parents?

Reference	Children	Acts of Obedience
Genesis 22:7	Isaac	

<i>Genesis 28:6-7</i>	Jacob	
<i>1 Samuel 9:3-5</i>	Saul	
<i>1 Samuel 17:17-20</i>	David	
<i>2 Kings 4:5-6</i>	Widow's son	
<i>Luke 2:51</i>	Jesus	

6. What are the consequences these parents faced when they failed to train up their children to honor and obey them? Can you think of other such examples in the Bible?

Reference	Parents	Consequences
<i>1 Samuel 2:12</i>	Eli	
<i>1 Samuel 8:1-3</i>	Samuel	
<i>1 Kings 1:5, 6</i>	David	
<i>2 Kings 2:23-24</i>	-	

7. Read Deuteronomy 21:18-21. What did the Mosaic Law instruct parents to do concerning their children who are persistently rebellious? What are the spiritual implications for obedience/disobedience towards parents?
8. What did Paul teach concerning disobeying one's parents? Romans 1:28-31; 2 Timothy 3:1-5. What are the consequences?

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Are there any differences between “obeying,” “honoring” and “respecting” parents? If so, what are they? (Hint: Does age have anything to do with it?)
2. What is the “best” age for teaching a child to honor, respect and obey his parents? Give some practical illustrations in the home environment.
3. Why is managing the family well and having obedient children a criterion for qualifying as an elder in church (1 Timothy 3:4)? Discuss how having obedient/disobedient children may benefit/hinder an elder’s ministry.
4. How do children honor and respect their parents or elderly in your culture/country? Name some specific actions or activities. In what ways have honor and respect towards parents and the elderly eroded or improved in your culture? Why? How can honor and respect towards parents and the elderly be restored and encouraged?
5. In your opinion, what is the difference between the practice of filial piety and the biblical honor and respect expected of every child towards his parents? In what ways is this practice harmful or beneficial to the children?
6. How does the biblical “honor and respect” for parents relate to the respecting or even veneration of ancestors (ancestor worship) in Asian (and elsewhere) customs, religions and traditions? In what ways are these pagan practices a counterfeit and distortion of biblical truths?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 161-165.

Sibling Rivalry

PROBABLY ALL parents everywhere struggle with the problem of rivalry between their children. The problem is not a new one. The Bible has several examples, (sometimes fatal) of siblings not getting along with or competing with one another.

Sometimes sibling rivalry was a direct result of parental partiality. Even parents who are mightily used by God are flawed vessels when it comes to parenting. The Bible often alludes to the privileges of the firstborn, yet we also see that in His sovereignty God at times intentionally chooses the younger over the older to fulfill His purposes. Although this does create rivalry amongst the siblings, the outcome was usually positive for both the older and younger.

What Does The Bible Say?

- Consider the following examples of sibling rivalry in the Bible. What are some of the causes? Who was “at fault?” Why?

References	Siblings	Causes and Outcomes
Genesis 4:8	Cain and Abel	
Genesis 21:9; Galatians 4:29	Ishmael and Isaac	
Genesis 27:41	Jacob and Esau	
Genesis 30:3-13; 37:2, 4, 8, 9	Joseph and his brothers	
Numbers 12:2	Miriam and Aaron	
Judges 8:29-31; 9:1-21	Abimelech and his half-brothers	
Judges 11:1-3	Jepthah and his half-brothers	
1 Samuel 17:28-29	Eliab and David	
2 Samuel 13:1-19	Amnon and Tamar	
2 Samuel 13:23-29	Amnon and Absalom	

- Parental partiality is one of the root causes of sibling rivalry in the Bible. Describe the long term effects these parents’ apparent favoritism had on their respective children:

Reference	Parents Who Showed Partiality	Effects on their Children
Genesis 25:28; 27:1-28:5; 31:38	Isaac and Rebekah	
Genesis 37:3; 42:7-8; 45:1-7; 46:29	Jacob and Rachel	

3. In Genesis 26:34-35; 27:46-28:8, identify the motives Rebekah had in her reactions towards her daughter-in-laws (Esau's wives). What may have been her real concern in separating Jacob from her twin brother Esau at this stage? As a mother and mother-in-law, are her reactions godly or ungodly? Why?

4. Note the pre-eminence of the younger siblings over the older in various passages. Identify the siblings involved and trace the outcome of their lives:

Reference	Younger Sibling/Older Sibling	Outcome
Genesis 4:25-5:8	Seth/Cain	Seth was in Adam's genealogy
Genesis 38:27-30; Ruth 4:18-21; Matthew 1:3	Perez/Zerah	Perez in David's and Jesus' genealogy
Genesis 29:16-18		
Genesis 48:14		
Exodus 7:7		
1 Samuel 16:10-13		

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. From your observations in the Bible, what are the lessons which may be learned concerning sibling rivalry today? What can parents and siblings do to prevent or overcome sibling rivalry?

2. In your culture, are the influences which in-laws have over siblings positive or negative in the family? Are there cultural practices in extended families that hinder or enhance sibling relationships?

3. What are the prevailing customs concerning the rights and privileges of older and younger siblings in your culture/country? Do any conflicts arise because of the traditional views? Are traditional views changing?

4. What are the cultural gender differences in your society? Do conflicts arise because of the traditional views? Are the traditional views changing?

5. In your culture, is parental partiality of favoritism common? Why? What factors cause parents to be partial towards or against their own children?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 168-175.

The Training & Nurture of Children

THE FAMILY is the structure God has created in which to protect and nurture children. God's design for a family includes a healthy, God-honoring marriage, a husband/father who models spiritual leadership in the home; fathers and mothers working together towards Godly parenting, and who are passionate about building strong families.

Yet as we all know, families are under pressure today. Even within the Church, many families are struggling or dysfunctional. We are told that in most places the divorce rate among Christian families is essentially the same as for non-Christians. The issues facing families today are vastly different than those from any other age. In no other age have the following topics, (from news headlines I saw while working on this section), been part of the milieu of threats and pressures:

- “US government is losing battle against internet child pornography.”
- “Kids are using their camera-ready cell phones to augment their dating relationships by snapping and sending nude photos of themselves.”
- “12 year old is found working at strip club in Dallas.”
- “Prom package approved by School Board includes condoms for high school students.”
- “‘Miss Bimbo’ Website Causing Concern. (MissBimbo.com is a web site virtual reality game aimed at 9 to 16 year olds that includes dress-up and breast enhancement.)”
- “Approximately 1300 new stepfamilies are formed every day in the US.”

Our studies in this section won't have specific responses to the above issues, but we will get examples – both good and bad – of the family issues in the Bible. The insights and biblical principles you will find are timeless – serving well the families in any culture and every generation.

Parental Responsibilities in Bible Families

MILLIONS OF children suffer today in our “childless parents and parentless children”⁴¹ cultures. The biblical portrait of a family which consists of father, mother and children are no longer commonplace globally. Single mom or dad families, not to mention the many other combinations and “blending” of families often means children grow up emotionally scarred and socially disadvantaged. The cycle of broken and divorced families can be broken if parents return to God’s “timeless handbook on child rearing”⁴² – the Bible.

What are God’s expectations of parents? We can draw crucial lessons from portraits of both good and bad parenting in Scripture. Effective parenting takes place only when parents heed the specific God-given instructions concerning their responsibilities in raising godly children.

What Does The Bible Say?

1. What do these verses imply on the responsibilities of parents towards their children? Proverbs 10:1; 15:20; 20:20; 23:22, 25; 28:24; 30:11, 17.
2. The following verses suggest specific things parents should do for their children. Review each set of verses and identify the specific responsibilities of fathers and mothers. Then, find one word or theme that summarizes what parents did or should do for their children. The first one is done for you.

References	Responsibilities of Father/Mother	One-Word Theme
Ephesians 5:23 Genesis 18:19; Numbers 1:4; 1 Timothy 3: 4-5; 5:14	Father is the head of wife and children; responsible for their physical and spiritual welfare; lead and direct their families; mothers to manage their homes.	Lead
Job 1:5; Genesis 17:18; 1 Samuel 1:11,27; 2 Samuel 12:16; 1 Chronicles 29:19; Ezra 8:21		
Luke 2:22; Judges 13:2,5; Numbers 6:1-21; 1 Samuel 1:11,24, 28		
2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Timothy 5:8; Luke 11:11-12; Proverbs 31:10, 15, 22, 27; 2 Samuel 12: 15-16, 21; 1 Kings 14:1,2; John 4:46-54; Matthew 17:14-18		

⁴¹ Zuck, Precious in His Sight, 105.

⁴² Ibid., 107.

Genesis 22:2; 31:28; 2
Samuel 13:37-14:1;
Proverbs 3:12, 13:24;
Luke 15:20-24; John 4:46-
49; 1 Thessalonians 2:7;
Malachi 4:5-6

Isaiah 49:22; Isaiah
66:12; Hosea 11:3; Job
29:5; 2 John 4

Genesis 8:2; 31:54; Job
1:5; Genesis 8:20; 26:25;
Joshua 4:1-7

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12;
Ephesians 6:4; Colossians
3:21

Parental responsibilities also include modeling, disciplining and teaching. These themes are discussed in separate chapters.

3. From the following verses in Proverbs, what are the 2 main characteristics in a son which bring joy to the parents?
 - Proverbs. 10:1; 13:1; 15:20; 17:21; 22:15; 23:15,24,25; 27:11; 29:3, 17.

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Make a list of what parents can do each day to commend, encourage, and compliment their children (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).

2. While encouraging and affirming our children is important, some people are concerned that such affirmation should have some external referent. Read the following and discuss:

“What happens when a child receives a pleasantly meaningless message to the effect that the child is the greatest in every possible way? ... Some children will simply tune out such messages ... They may repeat the phrases on occasion but do not take them to heart in any enduring sense. The messages change nothing about their notions of who they are. ... [Other children] may develop an exaggerated, though empty and ultimately fragile, sense of their own powers. Some dissociate their feelings of self-worth from any conduct that they are personally responsible for... Other children develop a skepticism about such statements and become increasingly inured to positive feedback of any kind. In time, this can generalize into a distrust of adult communications and a gnawing sense of self-doubt.”⁴³

3. Discuss: Why did Jesus say that a parent who loves his or her children more than Him “cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26)? In other versions, Jesus even said that a person wanting to follow Him must “hate” his family members and his own life. How do you reconcile Jesus’ instructions here with God’s instructions to parents to love their children?
4. What is your opinion on the growing trend of “house-husbands” (husbands who stay home to take over the domestic responsibilities as their wives work outside)? What are some of the negative or positive consequences of this arrangement?
5. What are some responsibilities modern parents (Christians included) are finding hard to practice in your culture? Why?
6. What pro-active measures would you take as a spiritual leader to prepare young parents for effective biblical parenting? What can the church do to encourage parents to fulfill their parental responsibilities in their families?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 43-44, 105-121.

⁴³ William Damon, *Greater Expectations* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1995), 73.

How are Parents to Teach their Children?

“JUST DO it and don’t ask questions!” Or “Do it because I said so!” Do those sound like the way you tell your children to do things? These and more authoritative approaches used by teachers and parents sometimes do more harm than good in motivating a child.

How *should* parents impart a God-centered education to their children? In recent years, more and more child educators (both Christian and secular), have recognized the timeless wisdom found in Scripture and have incorporated some of these into their early childhood development programs. These profit-motivated “educators” and institutions are making good money from desperate parents who desire quality early education for their young ones. The irony is that these expensive programs parents are paying for are “free and clear” in the Bible.

Excellent childhood development programs do not have to be expensive. They are within reach by everyone around the world, young or old, rich or poor. The key is to unlock the treasures in God’s timeless Truth.

What Does The Bible Say?

- Write down the commands you find in the following verses. To whom are they given? These verses are common in that they suggest the first thing parents should do in instructing their children. Write a short phrase answer in the column “First Thing Parents are to Do.”

Reference in Proverbs	Commands to Children	First Thing Parents Are to Do
1:8; 4:1		
4:10		
4:20		
5:1		
5:7; 7:24; 8:32		
8:33		
19:20		
22:17		

- What do these verses teach parents to do when instructing their children? Summarize these with a short phrase or sentence.

Reference	What Parents Are to Do When Instructing Children	Summary
Exodus 12:27; 13:14; Deuteronomy 6:21; 32:7; Joshua 4:7		
Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19		
Deuteronomy 4:9, 10; 11:19; Joshua 4:22; Psalm 78:5, 56; Isaiah 38:19		

Exodus 13:8;
Deuteronomy 32:7

Exodus 10:2; Psalm
44:1; 48:13; 78:3-4, 6

3. Twice, Moses told the Israelites to do something when they instruct their children at home. What is it and why? See Deuteronomy 6:9; 11:20.

4. Identify the commands and the corresponding reasons or motives in the following verses in Proverbs:

Reference from Proverbs	Commands	Corresponding Reasons or Motives
1:8, 9		
1:5; 16		
1:25, 26		
1:30,31		
2:1-4; 2:5		
3:1, 2		
3:3, 4		
3:5-6a, 6b		
3:7, 8		
3:9, 10		
3:11, 12		
3:21; 22-24		

For similar verses on parental instruction and motivation, please refer to Zuck, page 141.

5. Where was the teaching done after the Israelites conquered Canaan and were designated new homes in the various cities? See Deuteronomy 17:11; 33:8, 10; 2 Chronicles 15:3; 17:7-9; 35:3. What do you learn from these?
6. Where did Jesus do most of His teaching? See Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:21; Luke 4:15, 6:6, 13:10; John 6:59, 18:20. What implications do you see for teaching children from Jesus' approach?

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Scripture reveals that children in the Old Testament learnt the Torah by repetition and memorization (Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Psalm 113-118; Genesis 1-5 and Leviticus 1-8). How effective is this method in training children to learn the Bible today? From your observations, how has this approach benefited or hindered the faith of the children?
2. What is your opinion on home-schooling? How is it carried out in your culture? What positive or negative impact does home-schooling has on children? Discuss from the following viewpoints: spiritual, academics, character-building, social and mental development.
3. The rate of illiteracy and school dropouts are increasing even in wealthy nations like America. Why do you think this is happening? In your opinion, to what extent is this problem related to the home environment and family unit?
4. Asian and African students are often pushed very hard academically. Long hours in school and all manner of extra “tuitions,” remedials, and other academic supplements fill up their days, often at the expense of equally profitable activities such as sports or family time. What is your opinion of this emphasis? If it is a problem, what can be done about it?
5. In cultures where Christian schools are non-existent at every level, what would you suggest believers do to supplement for the lack of godly teaching in their children?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 136-147.

What are Parents to Teach their Children?

PROVERBS 22:6 famously instructs and encourages parents with a command and a promise: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Note that nothing is said about encouraging our children to try to be physically attractive, financially independent, or to have a high intelligence or worldly knowledge. The goals for our children relate exclusively to producing people of quality and character.

The responsibility of parents to teach their children is an obvious and pervasive theme throughout the Bible. As we have seen, closer inspection reveals *how* parents are to teach. In this study, we will see who has responsibility for teaching, and will look for specific things that are to be communicated to the next generation.

What Does The Bible Say?

1. Identify the people who are to do the teaching of children in the following verses. What does this suggest about different parental roles in teaching/training responsibilities?

	References	Who is to Teach?
In Proverbs	Proverbs 1:8a, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 6:1, 7, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1, 24; 8:32; 19:27; 23:15, 19, 26; 24:13, 21; 27:11	
	Proverbs 1:8b; 6:20; 31:1; 31:26	
In New Testament	Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12	
	2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15	

2. In these verses, note the phrases relating to parents teaching/training their children:

Reference	Words/phrases Pertaining to Teaching/Training Children
Genesis 18:19	
Deuteronomy 32:46	
1 Samuel 17:20	

3. List the specific kinds of things parents are to teach their children in these passages:

Reference	Specific Things Parents Are to Teach
Exodus 10:1-2; 12:25-27; 13:1-2, 11-16; Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:20; Joshua 4:4-7, 19-23; Psalms 44:1-4	

*Deuteronomy 6:5-7, 11:18-19;
Psalms 78:5-6; 2 Timothy 3:15*

*Psalms 71:5-6,9, 18; 78:3-4; Isaiah
38:19*

*Deuteronomy 4:10; 6:2; 31:12, 13;
Psalm 34:11; Job 28:28; Proverbs
15:33*

*Proverbs 1:2-7; 22:6; 1 Corinthians
10:1; Titus 3:10; Ephesians 6:4*

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Proverbs 22:6 states: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” What does “train” mean? Who is the “child”? What does “in the way he should go” mean? (Note the idea that the training for each child may be different, depending on the child’s gifts, talents, interests, and capacity.)
2. What is the point of the second part of the verse (refer to Zuck, pages 134-136)? Does it ring true in your experience? Why do some Christian children stray from their faith and live ungodly lives as adults in spite of having received godly training and teaching from their parents?
3. In your culture/society, is formal or informal education most emphasized or valued? Academics or character-building training? Skills or knowledge? Why? In your opinion, is there a proper balance?

4. Is there a difference between training and teaching our children? If so, what is that difference? Give some examples (Hint: Does the age of the child have anything to do with it?).

5. Do you think mothers and fathers have differing responsibilities regarding teaching/training their children? If so, what are they?

6. The education of children today is often left up to the schools. Is that the case in your society? What is the focus of teaching of children in schools today? In what ways, positively or negatively, does public school education affect children today? How might parents “take back” some of the responsibilities for teaching and training their children?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 129-138.

The Impact of Parental Modeling – and of Indifference

“DO AS I say – not as I do!” Have you hear (or seen) parents say that to their children? There surely is no place for such an attitude or parenting style in Scripture. God expects parents and other adults to be positive role models for their children. It is a well known fact that children “seldom live up the standards they do not see exemplified in their fathers and mothers.”⁴⁴ Solomon puts it simply: “The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him” (Proverbs 20:7).

There are examples of good parental modeling, and many examples of bad parental modeling in Scripture. Children often followed those examples, repeating the mistakes of their fathers and mothers. As we shall discover, the consequences of bad parenting can affect whole nation and generations for as long as 200 years!

“May the footprints that we leave, cause them to believe, and the lives we lead inspire them to obey!”⁴⁵

What Does The Bible Say?

1. Study the following passages. For each passage or incident, state the bad behavior of the father, and then note how that example was followed by the children:

Reference	Father's example	Reference	Son's response
Genesis 20:1-17		Genesis 26:1-11	
Genesis 25:28		Genesis 37:3-4	
Genesis 30: 3-12		Genesis 35:22	
2 Samuel.3:2-5; 5:13-16; 15:16; 20:3; 1 Chronicles 3:1-9		2 Samuel 16:21; 1 Kings 11:3	

2. What characteristics of good parental modeling you see in the following examples: Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19; Proverbs 14:26; Proverbs 20:7.
3. Eli is one example of an apparently very poor parental model. What were the resulting characteristics in his sons, Hophni and Phinehas? List the characteristics of Eli's sons:

Reference	Characteristics of Eli's Sons
1 Samuel 2:12	
1 Samuel 2:13-16	

⁴⁴ Zuck, Precious in His Sight, 115.

⁴⁵ Steve Green, *Find Us Faithful*.

1 Samuel 2:17

1 Samuel 2:22

4. Give 2 reasons why Eli as a father failed to impact his sons positively despite rebuking them of their sins? 1 Samuel 2:25; 2:29.

5. King Jeroboam is an example of how one man's sins can affect the entire nation for many generations. What are the wickedness that Jeroboam did which resulted in "amazing" and "alarming consequences" amongst every one of the 19 kings of the Northern Kingdom? Read 1 Kings 12:26-33; 14:9.

6. Identify Jeroboam's successors (the wicked kings of the Northern Kingdom) and the description about their wickedness in the following verses. How do these relate with Jeroboam's wickedness?

References	Names of Wicked Kings	Descriptions of the Kings' Wickedness
1 Kings 15:26		
1 Kings 15:34		
1 Kings 16:19		
1 kings 16:26		
1 Kings 16:31		
1 Kings 22:52		
2 Kings 3:3		
2 Kings 10:29		
2 Kings 10:31		
2 Kings 13:2		
2 Kings 13:11		
2 Kings 14:24		
2 Kings 15:9		
2 Kings 15:18		
2 Kings 15:24		

2 Kings 15:28

7. The following kings in the southern kingdom of Judah “did right in the eyes of the Lord.” Identify these “righteous” kings and facts about their mothers:

Reference	Names of “Righteous” Kings	Facts About their Mothers
1 Kings 22:42		
2 Kings 12:1		
2 Kings 14:2		
2 Kings 15:1-2		
2 Kings 15:33		
2 Kings 18:2		
2 Kings 22:1		

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Manasseh had a godly father, Hezekiah but yet he was a bad king. As a result, his own son Amon was also wicked. However, Manasseh later repented of his sins (2 Chronicles 33:12-13; 18-19). Incidentally, Manasseh’s grandson, Josiah became king at the age of 8, which was 6 years before Manasseh died. In your opinion, to what extent did Manasseh’s repentance influenced his grandson, Josiah to be a godly king?
2. Discuss the meaning of the passage in Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9 viz. “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those

who hate me.” To what extent are parents responsible for the divine judgment upon their future generations?

3. If you are comfortable with it, discuss whether your own parents are (were) positive or negative role models. How about yourself? Do your “footprints cause them to believe, and the life you lead inspire them to obey?”

4. One man’s (Jeroboam) bad influence “caused an entire nation to be caught in a downward spiral for 209 years (from 931 B.C. to Israel’s fall to Assyria in 722 B.C.!” (Zuck, page 117.) Discuss any similar examples of one bad (or good) example being passed down or having consequences down through the generations in your culture.

5. How can children of ungodly parents escape divine judgment? Read and discuss Jeremiah 31:30; Ezekiel 18:4; 1 John 1:9.

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 115-121.

Disciplining Children

“IS YOUR child unruly or rowdy? Does he intentionally disobey what you tell him to do or not to do? Does he delay following through on what he know needs to be done? Does he get into mischief or even into serious trouble? How should you discipline children so that they obey more willingly and readily? How can you channel them into meaningful, rather than disruptive or mischievous conduct?”⁴⁶

Parents have a responsibility to lovingly discipline their children. An undisciplined child becomes an undisciplined adult. Hebrews tells us that we should endure discipline (12:7) and that we should not be discouraged or make light of discipline in our lives (12:5). Most of all, the man or woman whom God disciplines is “blessed” and taught from His Law (Psalm 94:12).

What Does The Bible Say?

1. What do these passages in Proverbs say about children and their natural inclination towards discipline?

References in Proverbs	Children's Inclinations Towards Discipline
1:7b; 12:1b; 15:5a	
15:32a	
22:15	

2. What do Proverbs say concerning the consequences of an undisciplined child?

References in Proverbs	Consequences of An Undisciplined Child
5:23; 15:10b; 19:18b; 23:14	
10:17b	
29:15	
13:18a	

3. List the results or characteristics of a disciplined child experiences in the following passages in Proverbs:

References in Proverbs	Results or Characteristics of a Disciplined Child
6:23	
10:17	
13:18b	
15:5b	
15:32b	
29:15a	

⁴⁶ Zuck, Precious in His Sight, 121.

4. Note the appropriate, loving parental discipline shown in Proverbs. Make some comments about what may be learned about discipline from these verses.

References in Proverbs	Lessons on Discipline
3:12; 13:24	
13:24a	
15:5a	
15:32a	
19:18a	
23:13a	
23:13b	
23:14	
29:15	
29:17	

5. How would you characterize the discipline shown in the following Scriptures?

Reference	Characteristics of Discipline
Deuteronomy 8:5	
Hebrews 12: 6-8	
Hebrews 12:9	
Hebrews 12:10	
Hebrews 12:11	

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. What were the consequences of these parents not disciplining their children? See Eli: 1 Samuel 3:13; David: 2 Samuel 13:21.
2. What do the following Scriptures about “the “rod” in Proverbs say to you about physical discipline (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15; 10:13; 14:3; 26:3)?
3. What is your opinion about spanking children? How do you (or others in your country) feel about it?
4. How can/must you provide firm but loving discipline for your children today? How do the methods and motives of parental discipline change as children grow older?
5. How are children disciplined in your culture/country today? Which of these approaches are effective and which are not? Why?
6. Proverbs 5:23 says that a child may die for lack of discipline. Why, in light of such serious consequences, are some parents reluctant to discipline their children? How can the Church help parents in this important matter?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 121-126.

The Education of Jesus

OVIOUSLY JESUS could read and write (Luke 4:16-20; John⁴⁷ 8:6, 8). “Undoubtedly, He could read and converse in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.”

Who were Jesus’ teachers? He probably learned from the rabbis and synagogue leaders every year as a youth when His parents took Him to Jerusalem for the Passover celebrations. Where did He learn? From the wisdom of His teaching, we see that His was not a sheltered life, but that He learned much about the ways of the world, from watching, listening, and being instructed. He learned and was able to apply “real world” lessons from the everyday things He saw around Him. What lessons can we learn about the training of children from what we see in the education of Jesus?

What Does The Bible Say?

- I. Make some comments about the education of Jesus from the following verses from Mathew (adapted from Zuck page 197). What do these verses say about the school of life that Jesus was exposed to in his childhood?

References in Matthew	Jesus’ Experience of Learning	Comments on Jesus’ School of Life
3:55; cf. Mark 6:3	He was a carpenter’s son.	
7:3-5	He knew about carpentry – the problem of getting a speck of sawdust in one’s eye.	
7:24-27	He had the wisdom of building a house on the rock instead of sand.	
6:19-20	He knew of the corroding effects of moths and rust.	
9:16-17	He understood the problems with sewing new cloth on old wineskins.	
13:52	He knew the use of storerooms in a house.	
5:15	He was aware of the need of oil in oil lamps.	
20:2, 9-10, 13; 22:19-21	He was familiar with the value of coins.	
21:42,44	He knew the value of a capstone.	
22:15-21	He knew the payment of taxes.	
5:13; 13:33; 16:6, 11; 13:33; 15:26; 23:23; 23:25-26	He referred to kitchen items including salt, flour, bread, yeast, spices, and the washing of dishes.	
6:26; 13:4; 24:28	He was acquainted with outdoor life: birds, vultures.	

⁴⁷ Zuck, Precious in His Sight, 196.

7:6, 10, 15; 9:36;
10:16; 12:12, 34;
13:47-50; 15:24,
26; 17:27; 18:12-
13; 23:24, 33, 37;
25:33;

He was familiar with the ways of
lots of animals:
Dogs, pigs, wolves, sheep, snakes,
doves, fish, gnats, camels, hens,
chicks, goats.

7:6; 11:21,29-30;
13:3, 45-46; 18:6;
21:33; 23:27, 29;
24:40, 41;

He also spoke of farming and
farmers:
Sackcloth and ashes, yokes, pearls,
millstones, a watchtower, tombs.

2. These verses in Matthew reveal that Jesus was familiar with horticulture and agriculture. Write short sentences how such familiarity with nature contributed to His growth in “wisdom and stature?”

References in Matthew	Jesus' Familiarity with Horticulture and Agriculture	Wisdom that Jesus Learned
6:28	Lilies	
6:30	Grass	
7:17-20; 12:33	Trees with good and bad fruits	
7:16; 13:7, 22	Thornbushes and thistles	
7:16; 21:18-22; 24:32-33	Figs and fig trees	
11:7	Reeds	
13:3-9, 18-23; 25:24, 26	Seeds	
13:24, 30	Weeds	
13:25-26, 29-30	Wheat	
13:31-32	Mustard Seed	
9:37-38; 21:34, 41; 25:24, 26	Harvesting	
7:16; 20:1-16; 21:28, 33, 29-41; 25:24, 26	Grapes and vineyards	

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Apparently Jesus did not attend public school as a child. Yet the disciples asked: “How did this man get such learning without having studied” (John 7:15)? What does the phrase “not having studied” suggest about Jesus’ schooling? Where do you suppose Jesus got his “education?”
2. Jesus was certainly wise (Luke 2:52) as well as educated. He obviously knew the Scriptures (the OT) well. The Gospel of Luke records at least 39 times when Jesus quoted from the OT. Discuss what the education of Jesus suggests to us in comparison with the education of children today.
3. It should be our hope that children everywhere have the opportunity to grow the way Jesus did -- in “wisdom and stature and in favor with God and Man” (Luke 2:52). What is your definition of “wisdom?” What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?
4. Where/how can children today learn wisdom? How might you, your churches or schools teach wisdom today?
5. At what age do you think that children should start their formal education in public institutions today (if at all)? What is your opinion of parents who send their children, as young as 2 years old, to preschool centers for half-day or even full day early childhood programs? What are the benefits or harmful effects on such children?
6. Jesus’ “school of life” setting was in an ancient pre-digital age where environment and natural resources are rich and abundant. Discuss how Christian parents can help restore the “school of life” environment for their children today.

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 195-200.

Children at Risk in the Bible

CHILDREN HAVE always been at risk. The book of Job, perhaps the earliest book of the bible includes heartbreaking passages about the neglect and exploitation of children (see Job, chapter 24). But while children have always suffered, there is one thing abundantly clear in Scripture -- that God has a special place in his heart for those children – the orphaned, the abused, the neglected, the hungry. The Oxford Statement on Children at Risk⁴⁸ puts it well:

Scripture clearly shows that God is outraged about what is happening to children. Our own anger is but a pale reflection of God's own fury and indignation. Our compassion for hurting children and the righteous anger that arises within us reflects nothing less than the jealous love and righteous anger of our Heavenly Father... Over and over again God's warning throughout the Bible is "Don't touch my precious children!" (Ex 22-24; Psalm 68:5, Ezekiel 16:4-14, Deuteronomy 24:17 etc.)

Jesus warned of terrible consequences for anyone harming his children: "...it would be better that a millstone be hung around his neck and [he] be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

The Oxford Statement continues:

Nowhere do we learn more of the loving and jealous character of God than in His protection and defense of His children (Deuteronomy 24:17, 27:19). Indeed, God entrusting His own son to humankind as a vulnerable child, requiring that Son to be nurtured by a frail but able family and community, symbolically provides a model of trust and responsibility which sets an example for His interaction with all humanity, and which shouts to us about the significance of children.

The justification for special protective guardianship of children at risk is clearly demonstrated and mandated throughout the Scriptures. Our studies in this section will help us understand that God's heart is broken when children suffer, and the clear expectation that our hearts must similarly be broken.

Children as Victims of Infanticide and Sacrifice

"THE SO-CALLED right to abort an unborn baby has led to the view that parents have a right to terminate a live baby."⁴⁹ In some countries like China, where there is a one-child policy and boys are preferred over girls, many parents and doctors are forced to commit abortions and infanticide. Some may have heard of the case of "Baby Doe" who was born with Down's Syndrome in 1982 in Indiana, United States. This innocent one was left to die by the parents because they "were simply exercising their freedom of choice?"⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The *Oxford Statement on Children at Risk*, drafted in Oxford in January 1997 provides both a practical and biblical rationale for Christian care for children. The entire statement may be view at: www.viva.org.

⁴⁹ Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, 81.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

Unfortunately, even infanticide and child sacrifice are not unknown in the Bible. Roy Zuck points to us that infanticide in Bible times, viz., killings of infants and children in warfare, child sacrifice in wild cannibalism during siege and famine.⁵¹

Let's examine the Scriptures more closely regarding this most disturbing subject.

LESSON 26

What Does The Bible Say?

1. Describe in short sentences how children were killed in these passages. Identify the contexts and the names of the persons/tribes who committed this act:

Reference	Context	Description of Infanticide
2 Kings 8:12	Hazael murdered King Ben-Hadad of Aram and succeeded him as king.	King Hazael dashed the little children to the ground.
Exodus 1:15-22; Acts 7:19		
Isaiah 13:16, 18		
Psalms 137:9		
Hosea 10:14; 13:16		
Nahum 3:10		
1 Kings 11:5,7		
Leviticus 12:31		
Genesis 19:36-38		
2 Kings 3:26-27		
Matthew 2:16		

2. Describe in short sentences how the Israelites committed infanticide in the following passages. Be sure to read the verses around these selected, in order to understand the contexts and names of persons/kings/tribes who committed this act:

⁵¹ Ibid.

Reference	Context	Description of Infanticide by the Israelites
2 Kings 3:17:6-7, 17		
2 Kings 16:2-3; 2 Chronicles 28:3		
2 Kings 21:1, 6; 2 Chronicles 33:6		
Isaiah 30:33		
Jeremiah 7:31; 19:6; 32:35		
Ezekiel 20:26		
Ezekiel 16:20-21; 23:37		
Ezekiel 20:26,31		
Ezekiel 23:39		
Micah 6:7		
2 Kings 6:24-29		
2 Kings 25:1-21		
Lamentations 2:20; 4:10		

3. What are the words used by the prophets to denounce infanticide (again, be sure to examine the verses around the target verses to understand the context)?

Reference	Prophet	Words Used to Denounce Infanticide
Jeremiah 7:31; 19:6; 32:35		
Isaiah 30:33		
Ezekiel 20:26		
Ezekiel 16:20-21; 23:37		
Ezekiel 20:26,31		
Ezekiel 23:39		
Micah 6:7, 8		

4. What are God's commands to the Israelites in regard to infanticide? Leviticus 18:21; 20:3; Deuteronomy 18:10

5. What were the root causes of infanticide as mentioned in these passages? See Ezekiel 5:10; Leviticus 26:27-29 and Deuteronomy 28:53-57.

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

This study gave us some very unpleasant things to think/talk about. Let's learn from one another as you discuss the following questions.

1. What is your opinion concerning Jephthah's killing her daughter as a sacrifice in Judges 11:30-31? Do you agree that his action constitutes infanticide? Why?

2. Have you ever reflected on Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22? Give your reasons why this is not a pagan act of child sacrifice. Cross reference: Genesis 17:4-7.

3. Why did God command the slaughtering of children in the following passages: Joshua 6:21; 8:26; 10:28, 32, 35, 39, 40; 11:11? Cross reference: Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 9:4-5. Discuss how these might be interpreted in any modern contexts/situations.

4. Discuss why didn't God spare the lives of the "innocent" children when He passed judgment upon the adults. Note these examples: The flood (Genesis 6:5), destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20); destruction of Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:2-3) and the Canaanites (Exodus 23:33).

5. Do people in your culture still commit infanticide today? If so, in what ways are acts of infanticide being practiced? Explain the contexts and reasons for these acts and relate them to the biblical examples above.

6. Would you say that mothers (especially unwed teenage mothers) who abandon their babies in public places are committing infanticide? How can you or your community help to prevent such form of infanticide from taking place?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, Precious in His Sight, pages 81-89.

Oxford Statement on Children at Risk at www.viva.org.

Victims of Abuse and Exploitation

IT IS difficult to know, much less discuss, the horrific abuse which innocent children around the world are facing daily. Many of these abuses are culturally rooted. For example, some children born out of wedlock or from incestuous relationships find themselves despised throughout their lives. Others in impoverished nations are blatantly exploited through abusive child labor or sold into prostitution. Unless intentionally addressed, they continue to be passed down from generation to generation.

Dr. Wess Stafford, the president of Compassion International, himself a victim of abuse in a boarding school situation as a child, spoke of years of struggles in overcoming his childhood scars right through his adulthood.⁵² Only his determination not to let those experiences and the resulting anger and bitterness define his life, enabled him to put it behind him and move on with a commitment to caring for children in similar circumstances all over the world. Imagine how many more lives are being ruined each day in the hands of wicked perpetrators if child abuse and exploitation are not confronted or prevented.

The voice of the Lord continues to speak on behalf of child victims as in the days of old – “...spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed” (Isaiah 58:10). Stand up and be counted as a “Repairer of Broken Walls” and “Restorer of Streets with Dwellings” (v. 12).

What Does The Bible Say?

1. What kind of abuses or oppression were orphans in the Bible subjected to? These verses give some examples.

Reference	Abuses and Oppressions Faced by Orphans
Job 6:27	
Job 24:3; Isaiah 10:2	
Job 24:9	
Psalms 10:18	

2. Read the following accounts of the suffering of children in the OT. Comment on the context and reasons for the suffering. Compare with situations you hear of or know about today.

Reference	Context or Reason for the Suffering
Joshua 7:24-26	
Psalms 106:37-38	
Jeremiah 31:15	
Lamentations 1:16; 2:11; 4:9,10	
Joel 3:3	

3. One of the problems faced by children in the Bible was being taken away forcibly from their homes. Identify the circumstances that caused them to be in such a situation:

⁵² _____ Protecting Children: Prevention and Immediate Response – Compassion International’s Guide to Protecting Children from Abuse (Compassion International: Col. Springs, USA). Most portions of this Study are taken from this wonderful Guide.

Reference	Child	Circumstance
Genesis 37:12-36	Joseph	Sold as a slave by his brothers to Egypt; lived in Egypt for 93 years.
Exodus 2:8-10	Moses	
2 Kings 5:1-3	Naaman's servant girl	
1 Kings 4:1-7	Widow whose sons were going to be sold into slavery	
Daniel 1:3-7	Daniel and his 3 companions	

4. The following children were despised in the Bible because they were products of the sinful incestuous or illicit acts of adults. Can you identify them? As always, also examine the verses surrounding these target verses to better grasp the context.

Reference	Child	Incestuous/Illicit Relationships
Genesis 19:30-38	Moab and Ben-Ammi	Lot and two daughters
Genesis 38:1-30		Tamar and her father-in-law, Judah
2 Samuel 12:15-23		David and Bathsheba
Hosea 1:2-9		Gomer and Hosea

5. What does the Bible say concerning incestuous or illicit sexual relationships? Leviticus 18:17; 20:14; Ezekiel 22:11. Is the Bible silent regarding the offspring of such relationships? Defend your answer from Scripture.

6. What are some of the consequences for those who abuse and exploit children or refuse to protect their rights?

Reference	Consequences for Child Abusers
Deuteronomy 29:17	
Exodus 22:22-24	
Job 22:9	
Proverbs 23:11	
Zechariah 7:11	
Malachi 3:5	

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. What are the most common forms of child abuse or exploitation in your community or country? Who are the abusers? Who are the caregivers who help rescue and restore the children?
2. What are some of the cultural practices in your country may contribute to child abuse? Who are the perpetrators in this kind of child abuse? How can this type of child abuse be prevented?
3. Would people in your church recognize the symptoms exhibited by a child who was being abused in the home? What training could/should be provided to equip the Church to recognize and respond when such cases are present?
4. Who are the “hungry,” the “poor wanderer” and the “naked” in the world today as mentioned in Isaiah 58:7?
5. Discuss the effects of TV, violent movies, internet porn and other aspects of media on violence, abuse and exploitation of children and youth in your country. What can the Church today do to counteract this influence?
6. What are some other situations which cause children in your culture to be vulnerable victims of child abuse and exploitation?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 23-44, 168-175.

Protecting Children: Prevention and Immediate Response – Compassion International’s Guide to Protecting Children from Abuse (Col. Springs, USA: Compassion International).

Will Infants Who Die Go to Heaven?

FOR CENTURIES, theologians and laity have been intrigued by some practical issues on the spirituality of children. One of these issues concerns the spiritual destiny of (innocent?) children. Some of the questions presented by Zuck in *Precious in His Sight* are the same kind of questions believers would have asked at one time or another, viz.,⁵³

- I Are children born with a sin nature? If so, what is their eternal destiny if they die as infants?
- I Will children be condemned to an eternity in hell, or will they in some way make it to heaven?
- I If children are doomed to eternal punishment, is it attainable by some means other than faith in Christ?
- If children are incapable of exercising personal faith in Christ, how can they be lost?

Most of us “instinctively” know our answer to the question heading this study – of course infants will go to heaven! But most of us have never given much thought to what biblical foundations support this conviction. This rather more “theological” study will give us some background to the issue and a more biblically informed response (or, it may raise more questions than it answers!).

What Does The Bible Say?

1. What is your opinion on categorizing every human being into 3 classes, viz. the saved, the lost and the “innocent?”⁵⁴ In what ways does it support or contradict Scripture concerning the universality of sin in mankind regardless of their age. State below what the following passages say concerning the spiritual state of mankind:

Reference	Spiritual State of Mankind
Genesis 8:21	
Psalms 51:5	
Psalms 58:3	
Proverbs 22:15	
John 3:36	
Romans 3:9	
Romans 3:10	
Romans 5:12.	
1 Corinthians 15:22	

2. When Jesus made the statement that “The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” in Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16, He was also referring to infants (Luke 18:15-17). Are all children, regardless of age, automatic members of heaven? How do these children get into the Kingdom? Who are the “little ones who believe in [Jesus] in Matthew 18:6?

⁵³ Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, 217.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

3. What is your interpretation of David's response concerning the death of his illegitimate son: "I will go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). Do you agree that this verse suggests that David's son was "experiencing a conscious existence in God's presence" after death and that they will meet again in heaven (Zuck, page 219)? Why or why not?

4. What does Jesus mean when He said that "Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" (Matthew 18:14). Was Jesus teaching a doctrine of universalism (everyone will be ultimately saved)? Why or why not? How does Jesus' statement implicate the spiritual destiny of infants when they die?

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/Themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Some Christian traditions have viewed children as sinful. Do you think it makes sense to talk of infants as sinful? Do you think such a position could lead to cruel and harsh treatment of children? Discuss.

2. In light of the above, Paul mentioned very plainly that "we were by nature objects of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). What do these passages say about the spiritual destiny of infants who die? Are infants exempted from the wrath of God when they are born since they are young and "innocent" (read Zuck, pages 239-240)? Support your answers in light of other scriptures.

3. What is your response to this statement by Zuck on page 219: "...heaven is occupied with many children, perhaps with even more children than adults." Discuss this in light of the high infant mortality rates around the globe.

4. Are there babies in heaven? If so, do babies remain in their infancy age when they are resurrected? What is your opinion concerning infants who are in heaven but “still needs to grow to maturity” (This position is against the idea that there are babies in heaven)? If so, what are the theological implications for resurrected bodies as a whole regardless of their age?

5. Is it possible for heaven to be populated with adult multitudes only “from every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9)? If not, is it then possible that some tribes will then have to be represented in heaven by children of even unbelieving parents who die in infancy?

6. What is your opinion on Charles Hodge’s position that “all who die in infancy are saved” based on Romans 5:18-20? What about infants of unsaved parents? Will they have the same privilege as the “elect infants” in going to heaven when they die as infants?

7. In *Precious in His Sight*, Zuck presented 8 views, some of which are discussed above, on why infants who die WILL go to heaven (please read pages 220-225). Which view do you prefer over all the other views and why?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 239-240, 217-236.

Child Protection in the Bible

WE HAVE seen that God is a defender of the poor and needy and children are His primary concern. In these last days, millions of children globally are in trouble, as Zuck puts it simply. Advocacy for children at risk in this 21st Century are no longer confined to the poor refugees in the Sub-Saharan deserts but also in the concrete jungle of developed nations. “All children are at risk!” scream the global child advocates. Therefore, all children need protection wherever they are.

What child protection “policies” has God put in place for His precious ones? For one, He has placed the burden on the adults to “[s]peak up for those who cannot speak for themselves...” (Proverbs 31:8). With the same intensity, He has warned that His wrath is upon those who are guilty of abusing these little ones. Over and over again, the Bible repeats His warnings: “Don’t touch My precious children!” (re. the Oxford Statement on Children at Risk).

What Does The Bible Say?

- Who are the primary objects of God’s care and concern, and what is the common theme throughout the following verses?

Reference	Primary Objects of God’s Care	Common Theme
Deuteronomy 27:19		
Psalms 82:3-4		
Job 29:12; 31:17		
Isaiah 1:17		
Jeremiah 22:3		
Lamentations 2:11,19		
Matthew 18:10		
James 1:27		

- What do these verses say concerning child protection in the Bible?

Reference	Child Protection in the Bible
Genesis 21:17	
Deuteronomy 10:18;	
Psalms 10:14, 18	
Psalms 68:5	
Isaiah 1:17,23	
Jeremiah 5:28; 7:6; 22:3	
Jeremiah 49:11	
Ezekiel 22:7	
Hosea 14:3	
Zechariah 7:10	
Matthew 19:14	
Luke 17:2	

John 14:18

James 1:27

3. What kind of child protection did the Mosaic Law provided for the Israelite children?

Reference	Child Protection Under the Mosaic Law
Numbers 27:7-11	Their rights of inheritance were to be protected
Deuteronomy 16:11,14	
Deuteronomy 14:29; 26:12	
Deuteronomy 24:17; Psalm 82:3	
Deuteronomy 24:19-21	
Proverbs 23:10	

4. Proverbs 17:17b says that “A brother is born for adversity.” Identify the brothers in these passages and briefly comment on the actions they took in defending their siblings in adversities:

Reference	Brother	Comments on their Actions
Genesis 34:17		
Genesis 43:34		
2 Samuel 13:21		

5. Isaiah 58 is a remarkable chapter. What is the “true fasting” that God requires in verses 6-7?
6. List the blessings that God promises to those who defend and help the “hungry,” the “poor wanderer” and the “naked” as mentioned in Isaiah 58:7-12.
7. What did God call those who cared and protected those in need? Isaiah 58:12; Psalm 10:14.

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. Discuss what it might mean to “pour out your heart like water” and “lift up your hands to him” on behalf of the children suffering from hunger (Lamentations 2:19)?
2. Discuss the type of help being given or preventive actions taken to protect the children in your culture e.g. Local Child Protection Law or Policies, NGOs etc.
3. Read Isaiah 58 verses 6-12. Construct a “job description” for the persons who would be a “Repairer of Broken Walls” (v. 12). List the job responsibilities, and list benefits that will come to those who are so called.
4. In your opinion, what kind of risks are urban children experiencing in this decade? What kind of child protection measures need to be implemented in urban environments?
5. Likewise, discuss the risks rural children are facing and the measures needed for child protection.
6. What are the specific kinds of protection children in your culture need the most? What are some traditional values in your culture you can “redeem” to teach adults on biblical child protection in your culture?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 168-175.

Biblical Perspectives on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

DO CHILDREN have rights? Aren't all human rights God-given? Is it biblical for man to create rights for children through the passing of laws and documents?

Amongst all the initiatives and documents promoting the welfare of children by NGOs and governments, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is “the most powerful legal instrument for the recognition and protection of children’s human rights.”⁵⁵ Its origins go back to a visionary Christian named Eglantyne Jebb in the early 1900s. The CRC was developed from Eglantyne draft on the “Rights of the Child.” It now has 54 articles and is ratified by all nations except two, which is, Somalia and the U.S.A. It can be categorized into 4 groupings of rights, viz., survival, protection, development, and participation.⁵⁶

Despite the CRC being widely used today, there were some concerns raised by Christians concerning the “rights” of a child. One issue pertains to Article 3 which is said to transfer God-given rights and responsibilities of the child to the State. Another concerns the secular rights language created by laws which contradicts the biblically based God-given rights. John Collier has a much more pro-active approach to this child right’s issue. He says:⁵⁷

If we have not got anything better, then we can still as Christians affirm much in the CRC. Just because it does not come from a Christian source, does not mean we must despise it. The challenge to the church is to maintain Christian input.

In this study, we shall take a closer look at 5 major provisions of CRC and view them through the lens of Scripture. Most of the discussions here were taken from *Child, Church and Mission*, pages 159-165. As you study each of these Articles, you will discover that they merely affirm what God commanded the Church to do as we have already learned throughout our workbook.

What Does The Bible Say?

1. Article 3 of the CRC on Best Interest of the Child says: “All actions concerning the child shall take full account of his or her best interests. The State shall provide the child with adequate care when parents or others charged with that responsibility, fail to do so.”
 - Discuss how Article 3 of CRC is supportive or contradictory of God’s commands in the following Scripture passages. Write briefly the biblical implications for the Church.

Reference	God’s Commands	Biblical Implications for Church
Deuteronomy 10:18		
Deuteronomy 26:12		
Deuteronomy 27:19		
Numbers 27:7		

2. Article 14 of the CRC on *Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion* says: “The State shall respect the child’s right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance.”

⁵⁵ Brewster, *Child, Church and Mission*, 160.

⁵⁶ Collier, *Toddlers to the Kingdom*, 58.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

- Does this Article promote Western values (or destroy traditional values) in your culture?

- What is the possibility of this Article be used to challenge parental authority in your culture? In what other ways might this Article be abused?

- Discuss how Article 14 of CRC is supportive of or contradictory to God’s commands in the following Scripture passages. Write briefly the biblical implications for the Church.

Reference	God’s Commands	Biblical Implications for Church
Deuteronomy 6:6-7		
Proverbs 22:6		

3. Article 19 of the CRC on *Protection from Abuse and Neglect* says: “The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child.”
 - Compare the provision of this Article with biblical teaching on parental discipline of a child. See for example, Proverbs 13:24; 15:5; 29:17; Hebrews 12:6 and etc.

- To what extent is this Article beneficial or a hindrance in protecting children in your culture?

4. Discuss how Article 19 of CRC is supportive or contradictory of God’s commands in the following Scripture passages. Write briefly the biblical implications for the Church.

Reference	God’s Commands	Biblical Implications for Church
Genesis 21:17		
Isaiah 30:20, 21		
Isaiah 58:10		
Psalms 82:3,4		
James 1:27		

5. Some people argue that the CRC discussion of “rights” of a child may not be culturally appropriate (especially in Asia).

- Discuss why this is or is not so and give specific illustrations from your culture.

6. Discuss how the provisions of child rights in the CRC are supportive or contradictory to God's commands in the following Scripture passages. Write briefly the biblical implications for the Church.

Reference	God's View on Rights	Biblical Implications for Church
Proverbs 31:8,9		
Luke 20:46,47		

7. Some also argue that there should be more emphasis on responsibilities and obligations because rights are self-centred. "Rights," they say, "are God-given and cannot be given or created by people or laws." What is your opinion on the above statements? Discuss how the rights in the CRC are supportive or contradictory to God-given rights in the following Scripture passages. Write briefly the biblical implications for the Church.

Reference	Purpose of God-Given Rights	Biblical Implications for Church
Psalms 33:5		
Proverbs 29:7		
Isaiah 1:17		
Zechariah 7:9,10		

Key Insights:

Biblical Principles/themes:

Reflection Questions:

1. John Collier says that "the CRC is crouched in the language of Rights."⁵⁸ Which other Article/s in the CRC (besides those we discussed above) do you have problems endorsing as a Christian advocate for children at risk? Why? See www.unicef.org/crc - Text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

⁵⁸ Collier, *Toddling to the Kingdom*, 58.

2. Despite the almost global ratification of the CRS, why are so many governments failing so badly in protecting children at risk?

3. Have you seen children “flaunting” their rights, in opposition to parental authority? Discuss. How do you think a child’s rights should be exercised in your culture?

4. What are the factors in your culture that encourage or hinder a child from exercising his or her God-given rights?

5. Based on all the Scriptures you have studied in this work book, draft a brief “Christian Rights of the Child” with at least 10 provisions, and support with Scripture references.

For Further Exploration:

Dan Brewster, *Child, Church and Mission*, pages 159-165.

John Collier and Associates, *Toddling to the Kingdom* (Chapter 10), pages 57-59.

Douglas McConnell, *Understanding God’s Heart for Children*, pages 23-31.

www.unicef.org/crc - Text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Appendix:

Hebrew and Greek Words for Children

Hebrew Words	Possible Meanings	References
<i>Yoneg</i>	Nursing or suckling infant	Numbers 11:12; Deuteronomy 32:25; 1 Samuel 15:3; 22:19; Psalms 8:2; Isaiah 11:8; Jeremiah 44:7; Lamentations 2:11, 4:2.
<i>tel</i>	Baby or very young child	1 Samuel 15:3; 22:19; Psalms 8:2; Jeremiah 44:7; 6:11; Lamentations 4:4
<i>Gamul</i>	A weaned child	Isaiah 11:8; Psalms 131:2
<i>Tap</i>	Little child or children (usually accompanied by their mothers). To be small or insignificant	Ezekiel 10; 9:6; Genesis 45:19; 46:5; Exodus 10:10; 12:37; Ezra 8:21; Genesis 50:8, Numbers 32:26; Joshua 1:14; Judges 18:21; Genesis 42:15; 1 Samuel 17:14; 2 Kings 5:2, Isaiah 11:6
<i>Bahur</i>	Young man or young person in prime of young manhood. Also often found with young women	Ruth 3:10; Isaiah. 62:5; Ezekiel 23:6, 12, 23; 1 Samuel 9:2; (They often die in battle: Deuteronomy 32:25; 2 Kings 8:12; 2 Chronicles 36:17; Jeremiah 11:22; 18:21; 48:15; 49:26; 51:3, 22; Lamentations 1:15; Ezekiel 30:17). Psalms 78:63; 148:12; Isaiah 23:4; Jeremiah 31:13; Lamentations 1:18; 2:21; Amos 8:13; Zech 9:17.
<i>Almah</i>	A young woman of marriageable age, characterized by virginity	Genesis 24:43; Ex. 2:8; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23.
<i>Na'ar and Na'arah</i>	Has a range of meanings, including infant boy and girl, and young boy or girl before puberty.	1 Samuel 4:21; Ex. 2:6; 2 Samuel 12:16; 1 Samuel 1:22; 2 Kings 2:23; Genesis; 34:3; 2 Chronicles 34:3;
<i>Yeled</i>	Generic for son or boy (Used almost 5000 times in the OT).	Isaiah 7:14
Greek Words	Possible Meanings	References
<i>Brephos</i>	Newborn infant	Luke 2:12,16; Acts 7:19; 2 Timothy 3:15; Luke 1:41; 44; 1 Peter 2:2; Luke 18:15;
<i>Nepios</i>	A baby, young child,	Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21; Matthew 21:16; Galatians 4:1;
<i>Pais</i>	Child or young person	Matthew 2:16; Luke 2:43; 8:51, 54; John 4:51; Luke 9:42; Matthew 21:15; Acts 20:12.

<i>Paidion</i>	Diminutive of <i>pais</i> , usually small child, conveying affection	Matthew 2:8-9, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21; Luke 2:17; John 16:21; Luke 1:59, 66, 76, 80; 2:27, 40; Hebrews 11:23; Matthew 11:16; Luke 7:32; Matthew 14:21; 15:38; Matthew 18:2-5; Mark 9:36-37; Luke 9:47-48; Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 10:13-15; Luke 18:16-17; Mark 5:39-41; John 4:49; Mark 9:24; 7:30; 7:28; Luke 11:7. Jesus called his disciples <i>Paidia</i> Jn. 21:5; Paul told people to stop thinking like <i>paidia</i> , and John 3 times calls his readers <i>Paidia</i> : 1 Jn. 2:13, 18, 3:7.
<i>Mikron</i>	Small in amount or significance	Matthew: 10:42; 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2; Matthew 18:14, 18:10.
<i>Teknon</i>	Generic for son, children, emphasizing relationship to parents. Sometimes refers to “sons in Christ” – those one has led to the Lord. Occurs 93 times in NT.	Matthew 7:11; 10:21; 15:26; 18:25; 19:29; 22:24; Mark 7:27; 10:29-30; 12:19; 13:12; Luke 1:7, 17; 11:13, 14:26; 18:29; 19:44; Acts 7:5; 21:5, 21; 1 Corinthians 7:14; Galatians 4:25, 27; Ephesians 6:1, 4; Colossians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 11; 1 Timothy 3:4, 12; 5:4; Titus 1:6; 2 John 1, 13; Revelation 12:4-5. Paul to Timothy: Philippians 2:22; 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; Titus 1:4.
<i>Neanias and neaniskos</i>	Young person	Acts 7:58; 20:9; 23:17; Luke 7:14; Matthew 19: 20,22; Mark 14:51; 16:5; Acts 2:17; 5:10; 1 John 2:13-14.

Compiled from Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pages 149-158.

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