

Billy Graham's 1955 Message Was More Prophetic Than We Knew

In this message from August 1955, Billy Graham describes problems that seem hauntingly similar to those of today. And the answer to every one of those problems is still the same—Jesus Christ.

Many Christian parents are becoming fearful that they cannot properly train their children in this lawless and wicked age. We have received scores of letters in our office asking, “What is the answer? What can I do with my son? My daughter?”

We are beginning to reap what has been sown for the past generation. We have taught the philosophy of the devil, who says, “Do as you please.” Behaviorism has been the moral philosophy of much of our education in the past few years. Psychiatrists have told parents to let their children do as they please, lest in restraining them they may warp the children's personalities.

We have taken God out of our educational systems and thought we could get away with it. We have sown the wind, and we are now reaping the whirlwind. We have laughed at God, religion and the Bible.

Many of our educational leaders sneer at the old-fashioned idea of God and a moral code. Movies feature sex, sin, crime and alcohol. Teenagers see these things portrayed alluringly on the screen and decide to go and try them. Newspapers have played up crime and sex until they seem glamorous to our young people.

Instead of publicizing the good and constructive things that teenagers do, we have played up the sensational lawbreaker. We

have taught our young people that morals are relative and not absolute.

At the heart of the problem is the failure of parents in the home. Evangelist Billy Sunday once said, "If you want to lick the devil, hit him over the head with a cradle." Parents today are not interested, apparently, in defeating the devil in the home. There seems to be little parental responsibility for discipline. Children are allowed to go wild.

One parent said, "I pay for my boy's clothes, I feed him. I give him an allowance; what more do you expect of me?" Many parents do not realize that they are responsible for their children's mental and spiritual growth and character building, as well as for feeding and clothing them. If parents fail, God is going to hold them responsible.

I want to give a few suggestions to Christian parents. First, take time with your children. Your children not only require a great deal of your time, but they long and hunger for it. Perhaps they do not express it, but the hunger and longing are there just the same. Love them; spend hours with them. Cut out some of your so-called "important social engagements" and make your home the center of your social life. God will honor you, and your children will grow up to call you blessed (see Proverbs 31:28).

Second, give your children ideals for living. Teach them moral and spiritual principles of life. Show them that only the morally and spiritually right attain genuine satisfaction in life.

Third, set your children a good example. A well-known story illustrates this point. It was the usual custom for a lawyer who walked to his office every morning to stop at the corner tavern for a drink. One morning when the snow had fallen, he heard a sound behind him. Turning, he saw his 7-year-old son stepping as far as he could in his father's tracks in the new-

fallen snow.

The father turned around and said, "Son, what are you doing?" The son replied, "I'm stepping in your tracks." The father sent his son back home, but that morning he couldn't go to the tavern; all he could think of was a boy stepping in his father's tracks.

When he was studying for his law case that day the boy's words kept returning, "I'm stepping in your tracks." About noon the father got down on his knees and accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior and said, "From now on I want my son to step in the tracks of a Christian father."

Fourth, plan activities for your children. Plan things together as a family. Make the home so interesting and delightful that your children will want to stay home; then they will never miss the things that so many young people are engaged in for thrills.

Fifth, discipline your children. The devil's philosophy is: "Do as you please." Children are going to be in society what they are in the home. The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, teaches that parents ought to lovingly discipline their children.

Ephesians 6:4 says, "You, fathers ... bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." In Proverbs 13:24 the Bible says, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly." And in Proverbs 19:18, "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction."

If you fail to discipline your children, you are breaking the laws, commandments and statutes of God. You are guilty not only of injuring the moral, spiritual and physical lives of your children, but of sinning against God. The Bible says that if you fail to discipline your children, you actually hate them.

The best way to influence your children is to set an example before them. Remember, the majority of children acquire the characteristics and habits of their parents.

The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Now, some parents carry discipline too far, continually harassing their children. The Bible also says, "Do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21). Parents should never give unreasonable commands. Nor should they ever give a command that they do not mean to be carried out.

Sixth, teach your children to know God, and bring them up in the church. Very seldom do parents have trouble with children when the Bible is read regularly in the home, grace is said at the table and family prayers take place daily. Most trouble with teenagers comes from children reared in homes where prayer is neglected, the Bible is never opened and church attendance is spasmodic. Christ gives the moral stability, understanding, wisdom and patience needed to rear children.

Many parents are not Christians. They have never received Christ as their Lord and Savior. Church attendance, if any, has been no more than a duty and a ritual. Their children have seen the insincerity in the lives of their parents. They have watched their parents go to church on a Sunday and live like the devil during the week. So the children have rebelled against religion as a whole; they have turned away from moral restraint. Many parents are only reaping what they have sown.

Christ is the answer to teenage delinquency. Christ in the home, in the lives of the parents, is the only permanent solution to the menacing teenage social problems in America.

If you are a parent, Christ can help you to rear your children in the fear and nurture and admonition of the Lord. If I were not a Christian, I would despair of my children in the moral

climate in which we have to rear them.

Get the Scripture and its principles ingrained into their souls—"precept upon precept; line upon line;" teach them "here a little, and there a little" from the Word of God (Isaiah 28:13). Get them into the habit of going to church every Sunday, of praying daily and of saying grace at the table.

That will solve 90 percent of the problems you have with your children.

If you are a young person seeking thrills, happiness and joy in some of these questionable avenues of pleasure, I beg you to come to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ can give you the greatest happiness, the greatest adventure and the greatest thrills that you have ever known.

If you will take Jesus Christ into your heart, He will put a spring in your step, joy in your soul and a thrill in your heart. Come to Christ! Jesus Christ is the one who can be joy and happiness and peace to all of you young people. I beg of you to surrender your life to Christ.

But there are many of you who will say, "I would like to give my life to Christ, but I cannot live the Christian life. I have tried before but have failed." Ah, yes, but when you receive Christ, He comes into your heart. He gives you supernatural power to live the Christian life.

You do not struggle alone, by yourself. He lives in your heart to give you power and strength to live the Christian life. You, today, can give your heart to Christ. In Romans 10:13 we read, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

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All Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version.