

Living With Lambs (Children)



SABBATH—JANUARY 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Genesis 16:1, 2; Genesis 30:1-9; Deuteronomy 8:5; Psalm 50:10-12; Psalm 127:3; Proverbs 3:11, 12; Micah 6:8.

MEMORY VERSE: "He [God] takes care of his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms. He carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that have little ones" (Isaiah 40:11, NIV).

CHILDREN ARE GIFTS FROM GOD. Outside of life itself, children are the most wonderful of all God's gifts. Children are a great responsibility, because they are such a wonderful gift. All parents have a wonderful and important opportunity to share with their children the good news of Jesus' love. It is important to teach our children the good news of Jesus. But children grasp truth first from how their parents live. This week, we will look at some of the lessons Christ gave to parents.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Having children means having responsibility as a parent. In the Bible, God teaches parents how to carry on their responsibilities faithfully.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 28.

SUNDAY—JANUARY 22
A SPECIAL STEWARDSHIP¹
(Psalm 50:10-12).

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them control over the earth. Along with this stewardship, Adam and Eve had the honor of having and raising children. The Bible teaches that children are gifts from God. Children belong to Him. So parents are responsible to God for how they treat their children. “Children are the Lord’s gifts to people. We answer to Him in how we manage His property.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 159.



Children are a gift from God.

What does it mean that children are God’s property? Psalm 50:10-12; Psalm 127:3; Isaiah 43:1, 7; and 1 Peter 2:9. How does children being God’s property change the way we should think about children? What do these verses tell parents about their responsibility toward their children?

Everything belongs to God because He is Creator and Savior. Satan claims to be the ruler of this planet. But God gained back His rulership of the world through Christ. This means God has reclaimed everyone, even children. Parents must always remember that their children really belong to God. This is surely one reason why no one wants to be an “unjust [unfair] steward”² (Luke 16:8).

Why is parenting a special stewardship? 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2.

Good stewards ask advice from the owner of the property they manage. Godly parents ask God for special wisdom through prayer and Bible study on how to raise their children. Manoaah and his wife asked the right question: “ ‘What rules should we follow for the boy’s [Samson’s] life and work?’ ” (Judges 13:12, NIV).

MONDAY—JANUARY 23

IMPORTANT DECISIONS
(Genesis 16:1, 2).

Throughout history, married couples have expected to become parents. Children continued the family line. They gave companionship to their parents. They helped with their

¹stewardship—the management of all that God has given us.

²steward—a person who takes care of another person’s things; a manager.

parents' work. And they cared for their parents when their parents became old and weak. As Rachel did, women often felt important when they gave birth to and raised children (Genesis 30:1).

Think about the comments below from married couples about to have a baby. Which comments represent good reasons for having a child? Which comments do not, and why not?

- “We thought a child would make our marriage stronger.”
- “I have always wanted a baby since the time I played with dolls.”
- “We love each other and want to share that love with a child.”
- “We were not trying to get pregnant. It was an accident!”

Becoming a parent is an important choice. The decisions about having children and deciding how many are important. What purpose would a child serve? Will God be honored if a new child is brought into the world? Are we ready and strong enough to have children? Are we willing to care for a child for a long time (1 Timothy 5:8)? Bringing up children may not be easy in troubled times (Mark 13:17).

But children have a way of helping families to be more loving, patient, and selfless. It is really a great joy to share with God in the creation of a new person and to experience the wonder of life with a child.



What influence did infertility³ have on some Bible families? What do you think might have been done differently to make these situations better? Genesis 16:1, 2; Genesis 30:1-9; 1 Samuel 1:1-20.

Many married couples struggle to understand why they cannot have children. These couples often quarrel about not having children. We should not judge such couples too quickly. We should be sensitive toward these couples and protect them from cruel remarks. They should receive accurate information and advice when they ask for it. They should have privacy to make the best decisions.

TUESDAY—JANUARY 24

LESSON FROM THE HEAVENLY PARENT (Philippians 4:19).

The Bible describes God as a par-

³infertility—not being able to have children.

ent. Jesus called God “Father” and introduced Him in beautiful ways (Matthew 5:16; Matthew 6:9, 14, 15, 18). God wants to be Father to each of us personally. The picture of God as Father is more meaningful to those who grew up in loving homes. But those who had trouble in relating to a parent may have trouble trusting God. All who come to God, however, are treated with the care that only God the Father can give. Before we bring up our children, we must let God the Father bring us up.

What parental⁴ responsibilities are seen in God’s relationship with His people? What guidance for

parenting does this give us?

“ ‘When Israel was a child, I [God] loved him [Israel]. . . . But the more I called Israel, the further they went [away] from me’ ” (Hosea 11:1, 2, NIV). God experienced all the emotions parents experience when teenagers refuse to listen to advice, behave in disappointing ways, or turn their backs on home. God values human freedom. He can guide parents to know how to lead a disobedient child or to accept an adult child’s bad decision. The father of the prodigal (rebellious) son did the same thing (Luke 15:11-32).

God as Parent	Responsibility	Guidance for Our Parenting
Deuteronomy 1:31; John 6:33-35; Philippians 4:19.		
Psalm 32:8; Isaiah 54:13; Hosea 11:3.		
Deuteronomy 8:5; Proverbs 3:11, 12; Hebrews 12:5-7.		

⁴parental—having to do with being a parent.



The prodigal son's father teaches us how to treat disobedient children.

How does God's attitude (feeling) toward those who refuse to accept Him help parents in dealing with rebellious children? God knows the pain of people refusing to accept Him. How does this bring comfort and encouragement to parents who worry about their disobedient children?

WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 25

DOING WHAT IS GOOD FOR CHILDREN (Micah 6:8).

Ellen G. White showed the impor-

tance of being kind and firm in dealing with children: "The mother and father's influence of authority and love will help them to hold their children more firmly and kindly." —Adapted from *The Adventist Home*, p. 308. Modern parenting research shows that control and support are important in developing emotionally healthy, well-behaved children. Support means giving warmth, love, and a sense of belonging to show the respect parents have for their children. Control means parents making rules and limits in their children's lives to help children respect themselves and others. Kindness and support, firmness and control, are the principles of Micah 6:8.

Evaluate the parenting⁵ practices in these families: Jacob (Genesis 37:3, 4); Manoah and his wife (Judges 14:1-3); Eli (1 Samuel 2:22-25; 1 Samuel 3:13). How could parenting with both firmness and kindness have made a difference in these families? What changes would have been necessary to make use of both firmness and kindness?

Full-time parenting means giving plenty of warmth, love, support, and setting wise limits that are good for the child's age. Have only a few rules. Be sure the child knows how she or he will be disciplined if she or he breaks those rules. Then be sure to

⁵parenting—bringing up children.

discipline the child. In homes where firmness and kindness go together, children have a better chance of accepting their parents' values. They will also grow morally⁶ in keeping with their ages and be more and more responsible in their relationships with others.

THURSDAY—JANUARY 26

SHEPHERDING (GUIDING) A CHILD'S HEART (Matthew 18:2-5).

Research shows what many parents and teachers know. Children have an active spiritual life. They



believe God is important in their lives. Jesus honored children and taught us about their spiritual growth.

How did Jesus relate to children? What did He say about their faith? Matthew 18:2-5; Mark 9:36, 37, 41.

Jesus supported the faith of children. A child's faith can be developed by the protecting watchcare that parents give them. Children must learn to feel safe in asking any question or in talking about any topic at home. Then they will learn to feel free to talk anything over with God. Home is supposed to be a caring place where children's needs are met and where parents are both physically and emotionally available to them. Then the children can quickly learn that God is always ready to care for them. When children understand how important they are to their parents, it will help them understand how important they are to God.

What was Christ's warning to those who would hurt children or cause them to sin? Matthew 18:5, 6; Mark 9:42.

If parents or adults hurt a child emotionally or physically, they make it hard for the child to believe in God or to trust Him. When a child is sexually abused, the child feels betrayed in the deepest places of the soul. A sexually abused child will always struggle to

⁶morally—knowing right from wrong, with a desire to do right.

understand God's love and a spouse's⁷ love. Adults who were abused as children often can find help in the following ways: (1) experiencing God's love; (2) living in a healing, accepting place; and (3) talking with an experienced counselor.

How does your relationship (connection) with the heavenly Shepherd (Jesus) influence your relationship with your own children and the children in your church? What changes would you like to make in your relationship with these children?

FRIDAY—JANUARY 27

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, "Misconception⁸ of the Mother's Work," *The Adventist Home*, pp. 244–247; "Discipline and Its Administration,"⁹ *Child Guidance*, pp. 221–268.

Younger members of God's family: "Your children are the younger members of God's family. They are your brothers and sisters in Christ given to your care by your heavenly Father. You are to train and educate them for heaven."—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 251.

One spanking enough for a lifetime: "Spanking may be necessary when other ways of discipline fail. But she

(the parent) should not use spanking if it is not necessary. But if other ways of discipline fail, spanking should be given in love. Spanking in love helps the child understand what he or she did wrong. Often one spanking will be enough for a lifetime, to show the child that he or she is not in control."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 250.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. List the principles in the second Ellen G. White quote above about child discipline. What would you like to do differently in your relationship (connection) with your child?
2. In your church, are there children of single parents or children from homes where there has been some recent trouble? If so, what could your class do to help these children?

SUMMARY: Children are younger members of God's family. As responsible managers, Christian couples should try to follow God's guidance when deciding about becoming parents and about the number of children they can care for. God gives plenty of instruction in the Bible to help His parent-managers to bring up children for His kingdom.

⁷spouse—a husband or a wife.

⁸misconceptions—wrong ideas.

⁹administration—how something is given.