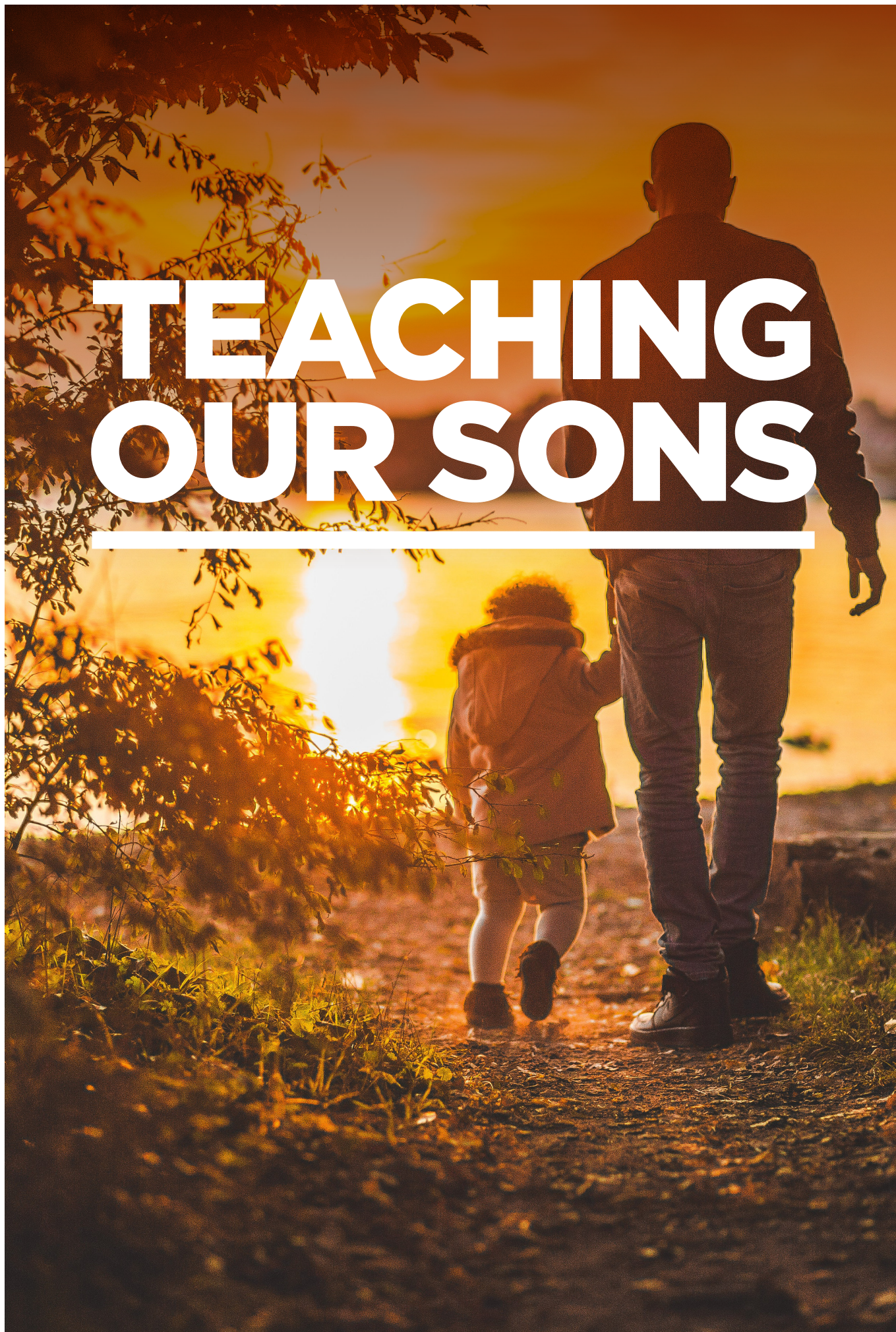


TEACHING OUR SONS



Only with strong foundations can we expect them to stand firm in a shaky world out there

WESLEY ROSTOLL

There is no doubt in any thinking person's mind that morality is globally in a serious state of decline. With every new generation, we seem to outdo the previous one in its wicked deeds. If we look back at the fuss kicked up fifty years ago when rock and roll had just been birthed we almost think people were crazy and what they viewed as obscene and rebellious seems timid when compared with the "normal" popular bands of today. The same can be said about television, school violence and so on. You have to wonder just how different our generation is from that of Noah's. Even in the churches we see high divorce rates, drunkenness, people yielding to immoral sexual desires and, probably most of all, a lust for money.

So how do we make sure that our children grow up against the grain in this world without having them alienate themselves from life in general? We certainly cannot expect their schools to install Biblical values in them, they are more likely to be told that they evolved from apes and to accept man's theories over God's Word. We definitely can't expect them to learn from TV or their friends either. Even youth groups produce horror stories and are not always safe. So the full responsibility then rests on us as parents and guardians.

BE AN EXAMPLE

I remember as a young boy being told by my father to never start smoking while he was smoking two packs a day himself! Perhaps this is the reason why both my siblings smoke to this day. We have to lead by example; Paul understood this, in 1 Corinthians 11:1 he says **"You must follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."** We cannot hold onto old habits and tell our kids that Christ is the One Who saves. The logical question they will ask in return is, **"Well what has he saved you from, the bondage of sin?"** We have been told not to be conformed to the image of this world but to be conformed to the image of Christ: **"Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of**

immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him" (The Message, Romans 12:2 & 8:29).

REAL VALUES

Probably one of the least emphasized parts of the Christian life is eternal values. It is natural for every parent to want the best for their children on earth, and so we make sure they study hard, and that they understand the importance of getting a good job so that they can make lots of money. While there is nothing at all wrong with this if taught in its proper place, we do not show them scriptures that teach us to first seek the kingdom of God, not to worry about food and clothes, or that God takes care of those who love Him. So their focus in life often is drawn toward material gain, the little bit of religion installed in them will often become warped and God becomes a type of genie to pray to who is there only to benefit us in our social standing.

We need to ask ourselves, if our children were to say as Paul, **"Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant"** is that really what we want for them? What if they gave up a promising career or even marriage proposal in order to become a missionary in a hostile nation?

These are hard questions to answer but if you can answer with a positive **"Yes"** your child will have a much better perspective for eternity. So beyond morals, you need to install eternal principles and a healthy fear of God into them which is a doctrine that also seems to have been lost. Proverbs 1:7 teaches that the fear of God is the beginning of all knowledge. Only with strong foundations can we expect them to stand firm in a shaky world out there. **"Teach your children right from wrong, and when they are grown they will still do right"** (Proverbs 22:6 CEV).