

ML201 Fathers and Children

Babies don't come with instruction books. Nor do young parents ask advice of parents and grandparents when problems arise. However, there's a book we can all trust, we just need a little on how to find what we need to know.

Our Heavenly Father shares His knowledge and wisdom in your Bible. And we have this confidence before opening the cover: We cannot go wrong if we train our natural children the way our Heavenly Father trains His spiritual children. And wisdom dictates that Ex 20:1-17 is the place to begin.

The Ten Commandments divide into two sets of five. Commands one through five are vertical between man and God; commands six through ten are horizontal between man and man.

The 1st Commandment mandates that we worship God and the 5th Commandment mandates that we honor our parents. We do this, not just by showing respect, but also by providing for them as they grow old.

That understood, there's a relationship between the 1st and 5th Commandments that we should not overlook. Earthly fathers and mothers are the first gods that little children know.

Here's a good lesson to learn from your Bible: Parents should answer their children's questions when they are old enough to handle the answers: *"And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? Then ye shall say ..."* [Ex 12:26-27]. Jesus followed this rule with His grown disciples. In spiritual matters, adults are often as small children [see Mt 13:10-13].

This lesson must remain brief, so I will include only two

more examples. Suppose a teenage son thinks he knows everything and nothing you say or do changes his mind. Depending on his age and the circumstances, you may want to follow the wisdom shown in the parable of the two sons [Lu 15:11-24].

The younger son wants to take his inheritance and go his own way. The parable doesn't say, but the father may have given him some words of wisdom before he left. Even so, the father did as his son asked.

The father didn't force his son to stay, nor did he chase him when he left. He was wise enough to "give him enough rope to hang himself" [a cliché]. Although this is not scripture, experience is the best teacher.

In this next parable, a sheep has strayed from a flock of one hundred [Mt 18:12-14]. The solution calls for action rather than inaction. Here the shepherd goes looking for the sheep; he doesn't wait for it to come home on its own. The wayward son left of his own free will, but this sheep strayed for some unidentified reason.

Your Bible is your guidebook for these and many other inquiries: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* [2Ti 3:16-17].

In summary, our Heavenly Father is the example for our earthly fathers. Babies don't come with instruction books, but God has not left us clueless. Both children and fathers are happier when they follow the examples in the Father's guidebook.