

INTRO: There has been a scriptathon going on with the children in the church as they are learning scripture after scripture, which is a good thing, worthy of praise & certainly a good thing for the children to do & for the parents to help. Instilling the Word of God in the minds of children is an excellent tool that will help their Christian walk as they grow. It is also an excellent method to teach the children the importance of God's Word & to keep God foremost in their minds for they need the Lord, just as adults do. We often preach so much to the older people that perhaps we unintentionally neglect the younger & this would be a mistake for certainly the young people will grow into adulthood & what they become will be determined greatly by the way they were raised. Those early years of life are far more important in the development of children, especially Christian children, than we may ever think or imagine. As parents, those little ones often become a handful & they seem to occupy 110% of our time & we find we have less & less time for ourselves, but if you allow them, they can also become some of the most precious & some of the most joyous times of parenthood. If any parent is worth anything, they will take time with those kids to teach them those things in life that will make them more prepared for the future & the greatest gift that a child can learn from their parents is that of serving God – starting at a young age so they do not become involved with the wickedness that is around us.

- A.** Our text tells us that Timothy was a child that knew the scriptures from an early age & it says those scriptures will open your eyes to the understanding that even for children, salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. Luke 24:45 states that **"Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures."** He was speaking to a couple of his disciples after His resurrection but understanding the scriptures will begin that process of opening anyone's mind to salvation. Look at the scriptures concerning the need to achieve knowledge of the things of God, especially in children.
- a. Matthew 11:25, **"...Thou didst hide these things from the wise & intelligent & didst reveal them to babes."** The scriptures are not so difficult that a child cannot understand them.
 - b. 1 Peter 2:2, **"Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."** This applies to children as well as to adults. If they are to grow into the kind of adults that are a blessing to God, they need to understand what God requires of them & this is found in the Word of God.
 - c. Parents, you have a responsibility & probably one of the greatest is to introduce that child to God at an early age, even before they actually know the difference between right & wrong. That way your child can know the requirements of God before they learn the meaning of "yes" & "no". When they know "yes" pleases you & "no" displeases you, they are beginning to understanding the foundation they need for a good moral foundation. Does this mean your children will never therefore, fall into sin, or never rebel? I believe we know this is not the case – no matter how careful you are, those children will try & "do their thing". There are times when they will go against your wishes & you may think you are not doing any good at all, rather you are always on their case. But if you have taught them that foundation & they know the difference between right & wrong, then you have come a long way in reaching them & preparing them for salvation. When they rebel, you correct – if they rebel again, you correct again, etc. until it finally sticks. Never give up on your children & never neglect an opportunity to build that Christian foundation that will keep them through all their years.
 - i. Do not allow your child to continue to rebel with no consequences. Do not give up on them, rather stay on their "case" & when they are under your roof, you set the rules.
 - ii. You may ask when to start with your children – before birth & then every day after. In Deuteronomy 6:7, God told the nation of Israel **"...& you shall teach them diligently to your sons & shall talk of them** (the commandments of God) **when you sit in your house & when you walk by the way & when you lie down & when you rise up."** Even a little child can know the basics of **"God is love"** (1 John 4:8) for they can see it demonstrated in the love of their parents. A child will make many mistakes, some intentional, some not, some they really do not know, but parents are there for a reason – straighten their path when it is crooked, pick them up when they fall down, bring them back on the path when they wonder from it, & never leave them to decide for themselves, rather as Joshua stated see to it that your house serves the Lord.
 - iii. Let me leave a paragraph from Charles Finney to each parent:

"WE ARE UNABLE TO SAY PRECISELY AT WHAT AGE INFANTS BECOME MORAL AGENTS, & OF COURSE HOW EARLY THEY BECOME SINNERS. DOUBTLESS THERE IS MUCH DIFFERENCE AMONG CHILDREN IN THIS RESPECT. REASON IS DEVELOPED IN ONE EARLIER THAN IN ANOTHER, ACCORDING TO THEIR CONSTITUTION & CIRCUMSTANCES... A THOROUGH CONSIDERATION OF THE SUBJECT, WILL DOUBTLESS LEAD TO THE CONVICTION, THAT CHILDREN BECOME MORAL AGENTS [OR, KNOWING RIGHT FROM WRONG] MUCH EARLIER THAN IS GENERALLY SUPPOSED... THE CHILD KNOWS THAT HAPPINESS IS GOOD, & SEEKS IT IN THE FORM OF SELF-GRATIFICATION, LONG BEFORE THE TERMS THAT DESIGNATE THIS STATE OF MIND [OR, THE REASONABLENESS OF IT] ARE AT ALL UNDERSTOOD. IT [THE CHILD] KNOWS THAT ITS OWN ENJOYMENT IS WORTH SEEKING, & DOUBTLESS VERY EARLY HAS THE IDEA, THAT THE ENJOYMENT OF OTHERS IS WORTH SEEKING, & AFFIRMS TO ITSELF, NOT IN WORDS, BUT IN IDEA, THAT IT [THE CHILD] OUGHT TO PLEASE ITS PARENTS & THOSE AROUND IT. IT [THE CHILD] KNOWS, IN FACT, THOUGH LANGUAGE IS AS YET UNKNOWN, THAT IT [THE CHILD] LOVES TO BE GRATIFIED, & TO BE HAPPY, THAT IT LOVES & SEEKS ENJOYMENT FOR ITSELF, & DOUBTLESS HAS THE IDEA THAT IT OUGHT NOT TO DISPLEASE & DISTRESS THOSE AROUND IT, BUT THAT IT OUGHT TO ENDEAVOR TO PLEASE & GRATIFY THEM. THIS IS PROBABLY AMONG THE FIRST IDEAS, IF NOT THE VERY FIRST IDEA, OF THE PURE REASON THAT IS DEVELOPED... THE NEXT MUST BE THAT OF OUGHTNESS, OR OF MORAL OBLIGATION, OR OF RIGHT & WRONG, ETC. I SAY AGAIN, THESE IDEAS ARE, & MUST BE DEVELOPED, BEFORE THE SIGNS OR WORDS THAT EXPRESS THEM ARE AT ALL UNDERSTOOD, & THE WORDS WOULD NEVER BE UNDERSTOOD EXCEPT THE IDEA WERE FIRST DEVELOPED. WE ALWAYS FIND, AT THE EARLIEST PERIOD

AT WHICH CHILDREN CAN UNDERST& WORDS, THAT THEY HAVE THE IDEA OF OBLIGATION, OF RIGHT & WRONG. AS SOON AS THESE WORDS ARE UNDERSTOOD BY THEM, THEY RECOGNIZE THEM AS EXPRESSING IDEAS ALREADY IN THEIR OWN MINDS, & WHICH IDEAS THEY HAVE HAD FURTHER BACK THAN THEY CAN REMEMBER... THEY MAY & DO AFFIRM OBLIGATION TO OBEY THEIR PARENTS, BEFORE THEY CAN EXPRESS IN LANGUAGE, & BEFORE THEY WOULD UNDERSTAND, A STATEMENT OF THE GROUND OF THEIR OBLIGATION."

- B.** Now, kids, let's talk. Some of you are learning scripture, I hope that all of you are learning scripture & will continue to keep that treasure in your heart for it will come in very handy as you get older. Parents, see to it that they continue to learn & know those verses, not just for a short time, but for always. Even if those verses do not make much sense to them right now, I will promise you, they will in the future & as they grow into a mature Christian, they will ever be thankful for those verses that they can hold on to, especially when mom & dad are gone from the picture.
- a. Understand that everyone has to give their life to Jesus Christ, everyone has to understand that He died on a cross so your rebellion can be forgiven, everyone needs to understand that just going to church is not good enough unless you understand why.
 - b. There are times in your life when it seems very easy to lie, to Mom & Dad & to others & maybe even think you get away with it. But lying will prevent you from going to heaven, it is displeasing to God & even worse, it is a sin & it will be punished. Some of you may get mad at the rules Mom & Dad have placed upon you & think you are being treated unfairly & they just do not understand – & may talk back to them thinking you know what is right & they do not. That is wrong, that is dishonoring your parents, that is breaking one of the Ten Commandments & it will be punished. There will be times when you think it will be great when you get out from under Mom & Dad & get on your own cause you have it so rough at home – let me explain something to you & you will probably not think I know what I am talking about, but the best times & the easiest times you ever have in your life is in the home of some godly parents that love you with a true godly love. When you get on your own, there will come times when you kind of wish Mom & Dad would handle the situation in which you find yourself but you will have to do that on your own by then.
 - c. Every child that can understand my voice should know what the plan of salvation is & what is required of each of you. I want you to understand & if you do not understand completely, speak with Mom & Dad as soon as you can so you will understand.
 - i. You were born in this world for a purpose – everyone of you has a purpose.
 - ii. God expects everyone to live in a particular way because He loves each of us & for those that learn to obey, He is preparing a wonderful place for us to live, cause we will live forever, not in this body, but our inner man, the real you, will live forever somewhere.
 - iii. He knows that somewhere along the way, you are going to go against what He desires & those that rebel against God, those that disobey God's commandments, if they continue to live that way, will end up in a terrible place from which they will never get out cause the punishment of sin, the punishment of disobedience is death that ends you up in a terrible place. The Bible calls that place hell & it is too terrible to describe.
 - iv. But God loves everyone (John 3:16) & He does not want anyone to go to such a terrible place, so He made a plan so that you can escape that terrible place & that plan is called the Plan of Salvation.
 - v. God has a Son that He loves very much, so He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to live on this earth just like you & I to show us how we are supposed to live. But Jesus Christ obeyed, He did not sin & because He did not sin, He did not have to die for His sins. But He loved each of us, you included, so much, that He died anyway, a terrible death on a cross, taking our place & He took upon Himself our sins. So when we come before God, & He tells us what we have done, Jesus is there to say "I love this boy or this girl, & I died in their place", so forgive them. And God will then forgive cause that punishment was already paid by Jesus.
 - vi. But we have to realize that we have sinned, we need to know that Jesus died for us, we need to thank Him for that & then live according to the commandments of God from then on. If we do that, then God has prepared a wonderful place for us where we will spend forever.
 - vii. Kids, you need to understand this & if you don't, speak with your parents or come speak with me & we'll talk about it. Cause no one knows how long we will live before we have to answer to God Himself & we want to be ready.

CONCLUSION: Parents, your kids are your responsibility that God has given you, do not let them down. Do what you know is right. Kids, you will have to decide what you will do with Jesus Christ & I urge you to make that decision now – do not wait until it is too late, do not take a chance upon getting a certain age & then deciding, but turn your life over to Him now & live in a manner that would be pleasing to Him. There is no better life, there is no better way, He will be with you & make your childhood a wonderful time & will be with you through all those hard times that you will every come across. Know your Bible, learn your Bible & use it as the guideline to live your life & you will never go wrong.