

# Taught

## The necessity for proper teaching

Several years ago the police department of Houston, Texas, issued a leaflet that told parents how to raise delinquent children. Here is a condensed list of what the leaflet said:

- Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living<sup>1</sup>
- When he picks up bad words, laugh at him.
- Never give him any spiritual training.
- Wait until he is twenty-one years old and let him decide for himself.
- Don't use the word "wrong." It may give him a guilt complex.
- Quarrel frequently in his presence—he won't be too shocked when the home is broken up.
- Give him all the spending money he wants. He shouldn't have things as tough as you had them. AND
- Prepare for a life of grief—you will have it.<sup>2</sup>

In the Old Testament there is a story about a prince who received the same type of upbringing that a parent might use to produce a delinquent.

Ahaziah was a young man who succeeded his father as king of Judah. Jehoram, Ahaziah's father, was a wicked king of whom the Bible says that, "he departed with no one's regret." The book of Second Chronicles goes on to say that,

2 Chronicles 22:1 Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place, for the

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<sup>1</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 695). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc. "Training."

<sup>2</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 695). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

band of men who came with the Arabs to the camp had slain all the older *sons*. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign. 2 Ahaziah *was* twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. 3 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor to do wickedly. 4 He did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab, for they were his counselors after the death of his father, to his destruction.

- Ahaziah suffered from bad training and that led to his destruction.
- He lasted one year.
- There is good upbringing and there is bad upbringing. Ahaziah received the bad.
- Parental instruction combined with the quality of counseling a young man receives from his tutors has a great effect on his behavior and the outcome of his life.

### **There is a proper doctrine to learn**

There was a man named Thelwall who thought it was unfair to influence a child's mind by instructing the child in any opinions before it should come to the age of discretion in which it could choose for itself. In reply to this notion Coleridge said,

“I showed him my garden and told him that it was my botanical garden.”

He answered, “How so, it is covered with weeds.”

“Oh!” Coleridge replied, “that is because it has not yet come to its age of discretion and choice. The weeds, you see, have taken the liberty to grow; and I thought it unfair in me to prejudice the soil toward roses and strawberries.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Elon Foster, *6000 Sermon Illustrations*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1996, p. 215. #1788.

- Children like gardens have to be cultivated early.

The Bible says of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, that,

2 Chronicles 17:6 He took great pride in the ways of the LORD and again removed the high places and the Asherim from Judah. 7 Then in the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; 8 and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah and Tobadonijah, the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. 9 They taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the LORD with them; and they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.<sup>4</sup>

- A wise king “takes pride in the ways of the Lord.” He does not submit to or adopt other “ways.”
- A wise king removes impediments to proper spiritual understanding.
- A wise king ensures that his subjects are properly taught. He does not assume that they already have spiritual understanding.
- A wise king reinforces the importance of the lessons to be taught by sending his princes to see that it is done properly.
- The written law guides wise teachers, and they visit every city to ensure that the law is taught.

### **Listen to the admonitions of Scripture.**

The Bible is unequivocal about the value of learning Scriptural principles. Paul wrote to Timothy and said,

2 Timothy 3:14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from

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<sup>4</sup> New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. (1995). (2 Ch 17:6–9). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

There are consequences for ignoring the instructions and admonitions of Scripture. This may be seen in the case of Joash king of Judah who listened to bad counseling from the officials of Judah,

2 Chronicles 24:17 But after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and bowed down to the king, and the king listened to them. 18 They abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols; so wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their guilt. 19 Yet He sent prophets to them to bring them back to the LORD; though they testified against them, they would not listen.

These officials abandoned God and influenced the king to do likewise. When God sent prophets to them to tell them to repent, they would not listen. The result was that God's wrath fell upon Judah and Jerusalem. The officials of the king's court were not merely ignorant; they were willfully ignorant.

### **Do not ignore competent guidance**

Sir Samuel Baker told the following story about an incident that occurred when Egyptian troops first conquered Nubia. The soldiers had to march through a desert area and they were short of water. So, the regimental commander put the troops on a limited allowance of water. As they marched they suffered from extreme thirst. So great was their thirst that they were deceived by the appearance of a mirage that exactly resembled a beautiful lake. Because of this deception they insisted that their Arab guide take them to its banks where they could satisfy their thirst.

The guide, however, insisted that it was an illusion. There was no lake. And so he refused to lose precious time by wandering from the proper course across the desert. However, his protestations against the soldiers were in vain. Words led to anger and anger to blows with the result that the soldiers killed the man on whom their lives depended for guidance.

The soldiers then pursued the illusion of the beautiful lake. Regrettably, as they approached it the delusion vanished—the lake had turned to burning sand! Afterward they suffered from raging thirst and horrible despair! Not a man of that regiment ever left the desert, and their parched and withered corpses were subsequently discovered by a group of Arabs who were sent upon the search for them.<sup>5</sup>

- The soldiers ignored competent guidance and relied instead on the pursuit of illusion.
- Apostolic guidance is competent to avoid spiritual illusions.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy,

1 Timothy 1:3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, 4 nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. 5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

- The apostolic doctrine is not haphazard; neither is it ill-considered opinions; it is not values for another age. It is God inspired instruction to produce love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Present day America, and many of the societies of the surrounding countries, have fallen into ignorance and debauchery because of their lack of biblical instruction—but in many cases

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<sup>5</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 1257). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

they don't even know it. They are deluded by a mirage of secularism and don't realize the depth of their depravity. They would fit well into the description of the ancient Israelites against whom the prophet Hosea brought his denunciation. One could substitute the word "America" for the word "Israel" and the admonition would fit well.

Hosea 4:1 Listen to the word of the Lord, O sons of Israel,  
For the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land,  
Because there is no faithfulness or kindness  
Or knowledge of God in the land.

2 There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery.

They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.

3 Therefore the land mourns,  
And everyone who lives in it languishes  
Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky,  
And also the fish of the sea disappear.

4 Yet let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof;  
For your people are like those who contend with the priest.

5 So you will stumble by day,  
And the prophet also will stumble with you by night;  
And I will destroy your mother.

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.  
Because you have rejected knowledge,  
I also will reject you from being My priest.  
Since you have forgotten the law of your God,  
I also will forget your children.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* (1995). (Hosea 4:1–6). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

## **Do not fail to apply the scriptural test**

It is the responsibility of individuals to apply a reasonable test to what they are told. The same is true about doctrines men teach that they proclaim to be Christian. The reasonable test for these doctrines is the scriptural test. If the doctrine being taught does not meet the test of scripture, reject it and avoid the practice it urges.

It is said that Napoleon frequently told the following story,

Once he said, while visiting a province, he came on an old soldier with one arm severed, dressed in full uniform. On his uniform the proud fighter displayed the coveted Legion of Honor. “Where did you lose your arm?” Napoleon asked. “At Austerlitz, sire,” came the soldier’s brisk reply.

“And for that you received the Legion of Honor?”

“Yes, sire. It is but a small token to pay for the decoration.”

“You must be,” the emperor said, “the kind of man who regrets he did not lose both arms for his country.”

“What then would have been my reward?” asked the one-armed man.

“Then,” Napoleon replied, “I would have awarded you a double Legion of Honor.” With that, the proud old fighter drew his sword and immediately cut off his other arm.

This story circulated for years. One day someone asked, “How? How did he cut off his arm if he had only one?”

The answer is obvious.

Often we accept without question what people tell us, never stopping to think things through or even to doubt the wisdom of the world.<sup>7</sup>

Religious guidance similar to the story above is circulating in America. A lot of it is false and it fails to meet the test of scripture. Just remember this: you have freedom to believe whatever you

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<sup>7</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 1466). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

want but that does not mean that what you believe is guaranteed to be right.

The Apostle John wrote in his first letter,

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

Many of the churches of today do not teach sound scriptural doctrine and the messages they bring to their members are meant to entertain rather than inform. They are like the prophets of ancient Israel, Jeremiah wrote about them,

Jeremiah 14:13 But, “Ah, Lord GOD!” I said, “Look, the prophets are telling them, ‘You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place.’ ” 14 Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds. 15 “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who are prophesying in My name, although it was not I who sent them—yet they keep saying, ‘There will be no sword or famine in this land’—by sword and famine those prophets shall meet their end! 16 “The people also to whom they are prophesying will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and there will be no one to bury them—neither them, nor their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters—for I will pour out their own wickedness on them.

And,

Jeremiah 29:8 “For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. 9 ‘For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,’ declares the LORD.

In the Old Testament book of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings there is a story about a man of God whom God sent from Judah to Bethel to take a message to King Jeroboam. The man of God delivered the message to the king, and pronounced a judgment against the altar on which Jeroboam was offering sacrifices. King Jeroboam reacted in anger and ordered that the man of God to be seized, but God caused the king’s hand to wither.

The Bible then says,

1 Kings 13:6 The king said to the man of God, “Please entreat the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.” So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored to him, and it became as it was before. 7 Then the king said to the man of God, “Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward.” 8 But the man of God said to the king, “If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place. 9 “For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came.’ ” 10 So he went another way and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel.

Thus far the man of God acted in accordance with the command of God. But that was not the end of the story for next we read,

1 Kings 13:11 Now an old prophet was living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the deeds which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, these also they related to their father. 12 Their father said to them, “Which way

did he go?” Now his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone. 13 Then he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it. 14 So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak; and he said to him, “Are you the man of God who came from Judah?” And he said, “I am.” 15 Then he said to him, “Come home with me and eat bread.” 16 He said, “I cannot return with you, nor go with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. 17 “For a command came to me by the word of the LORD, ‘You shall eat no bread, nor drink water there; do not return by going the way which you came.’ ” 18 He said to him, “I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’ ” But he lied to him.

- “But he lied to him.”

And the result was,

The man of God from Judah ate bread and drank water in the house of the lying prophet. For this reason after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that the lying prophet saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back. Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body. (vss. 13:23-24)

The lessons from this story are several, but we can take away this much:

- Do exactly as God says.
- There are true prophets and there are false prophets.
- Some of them will tell you that an angel has spoken to them.
- Even so, their message might contradict what God said.
- The consequences for disobedience are severe.

Peter wrote concerning those false teachers of the present day,

2 Peter 2;1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Followers of God are to be like the Bereans as Luke described in Acts Chapter 17,

Acts 17:11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.