

Train up a Child—A Prayer

With appreciation to Character First

Dear Lord,

We address you as our teacher. You have instructed us in the ways of righteousness and justice. You have told us right from wrong, the difference between what helps and what hurts. You have urged us to avoid the path to destruction and pointed us to the way to peace. You erected signs to avoid the wide gate but given us clear direction on the more promising narrow one. We praise you for teaching us, for instructing us, for training us, for educating us and for coaching us. You are the Word and from you come all good words.

We thank you for sending your son to teach us. Thank you for making the Word flesh. His beatitudes ring in our ears, his call to discipleship motivates our actions, and his challenge to lives of service gives us hope. His words are truth. His ways are sure. He is our authority. He is our teacher.

We thank you for the Holy Spirit. He guides us into all truth. He inspired people who inform and inspire us. He gives words of comfort and sentences of hope and paragraphs of grandeur. His words are profitable, motivational, and purposeful. By his work we are led into all the truth. He is our teacher.

We thank you for Scripture. We stand amazed that words that circulated through your mind now inhabit ours. We think thoughts you once thought. We realize that ideas that move us and shape us and change us are your ideas. We thank you for telling us of how you made the earth, walked on the earth, and shaped earth's history. We praise you for telling us of great women and men of faith. We praise you for commandments, proverbs, beatitudes, epistles, poems, laments, words of praise and words of critique. Make us students of your word.

Thank you for telling us the truth that children can be taught. We regularly witness the newborns learning to speak, children mastering language, youngster being trained to read, the young instructed on how to live and behave.

We ask you to help us train children. We ask you to give us a deep appreciation for your proverb that if we train up a child when he is old he will not depart from that training. Give us an understanding that when we train a young girl that training makes her a woman. Help us to train up children.

We pray for parents everywhere. Help parents who are rich to take time to train their children. Help parents who are poor find ways to train their children. Help single mothers to train their child. Be with parents who face chronic illness or who live under the stress of mental illness to do what they can to train up their youth. Help parents to see the importance of teaching their infants, instructing their toddlers, mentoring their adolescents, coaching their teens and standing alongside their adult children. We pray that parents will train up their children in the way they should go so that when they are adults they will not depart from what they have learned.

We pray for those who teach children whether it's the people in day care or in Sunday school or in elementary and secondary education. We pray that they will take their work seriously, that they will prepare themselves well, and that they will feel a calling to train up children. Let all teachers in all places, in every nation, in every faith, in every village, and in every city teach children to be people of character. Let them teach children to be honest, to be respectful, to be attentive, to be available, to

be compassionate, to conserve, to be courageous, determined, diligent, enthusiastic, flexible, forgiving, grateful, loyal, obedient, orderly, patient, responsible, self-controlled, and wise.

Help the world's children to have training in virtue, alertness, discernment, tolerance, sensitivity, initiative, sincerity, wisdom, deference, gentleness, responsibility, thoroughness, decisiveness, persuasiveness, humility, and leadership.

We pray for those who train those who train children. We pray for college professors and those who lead seminars. We pray for men and women who write text books and manuals. We ask you to help all these people to do the best, to reflect your standards and to give a firm foundation to training those who train.

We pray for those who deal with at risk children. Father teacher, it grieves us that so many children have been trained in so many wrong ways. They learn inappropriate ways to deal with others, to think of themselves and to relate to you. They see bad examples. They are ill-trained by inappropriate media. They hear the wrong words. They see the wrong actions. They are pressed to engage in the wrong experiences.

We pray for those who must unteach before they can teach. We pray for those who must deal with the walls that these children have built, with the inadequacies they bring to life, with the pain which clouds their thinking and the consequences of sin in which they have been immersed. Oh Great Teacher, do not let these teachers grow weary or become cynical or become angry or depressed. Create in them a pure heart every morning. Reward them with your blessings every night.

Surround those who teach at risk children with people who encourage them. Train these trainers well. Give them insight. Help them to understand what has happened to these children. Be with them as they take case histories and as they outline a treatment plan. Train them well.

Let these trainers of at risk children do well. As they redirect and refocus and retrain and restart young lives, give them more successes than failures. Help them to see progress when change comes so slowly. Let them focus on the one step forward not the five steps backwards. Help them to see more smiles than frowns, to get more "thank you" words than rejections, to see more well-balanced graduates than dysfunctional failures.

Help us all to never give up. We find great hope in your maxim that if we train up a child that when that child is old he or she will not depart from it. We hold on to that hope. We believe it is true. Help us in our unbelief. Help us when it doesn't seem to work.

So, great teacher, Lord God and Father, teach us. Make our hearts open to you. Make us your people. Teach us your ways. Let your words be on our hearts and deep in our souls. Oh Lord, you are the one God. Help us to love you with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our minds. Let your words dwell deep in our hearts. Help us to teach them diligently to the children,

In the name of the teacher who died on the cross, Amen

Posted by

Dr. Harold Shank

President, Ohio Valley University