



Spiritual
PARENTING



C. H. SPURGEON



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Publisher's note:

The new edition from Whitaker House has been updated for the modern reader. Words, expressions, and sentence structure have been revised for clarity and readability, while remaining faithful to the author's original intent and meaning.

All Scriptures are taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

SPIRITUAL PARENTING
Updated Edition

ISBN-13: 978-0-88368-959-2

ISBN-10: 0-88368-959-6

Printed in the United State of America

© 1995, 2003 by Whitaker House

Whitaker House
1030 Hunt Valley Circle
New Kensington, PA 15068
www.whitakerhouse.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Spurgeon, C. H. (Charles Haddon), 1834–1892.

Spiritual parenting / Charles Spurgeon.—Updated ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-88368-959-6 (trade pbk.)

1. Christian education of children. I. Title.

BV1475.3.S68 2003

248.8'45—dc22

2003017959

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1



How to
“Feed My Lambs”

Feed my lambs.
—John 21:15

The best of the church are none too good for this work. Do not think because you have other service to do that you should take no interest in this form of holy work, but kindly, according to your opportunities, stand ready to help the little ones and to cheer those whose chief calling is to attend to them. This message comes to all of us: “*Feed my lambs.*” The commission is given to the minister and to all who have any knowledge of the things of God. See to it that you look after the children that are in Christ Jesus. Peter was a leader among believers, yet he fed the lambs.

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Lambs are the young of the flock. So, then, we ought to look especially and carefully after those who are young in grace. They may be old in years, and yet they may be mere babes in grace as to the length of their spiritual life. Therefore, they need to be under a good shepherd. As soon as a person is converted and added to the church, he should become the object of the care and kindness of his fellow members. He has just newly come among us but has no familiar friends among the saints. Therefore, let us all be friendly to him. We should even take leave of our older comrades as we must be doubly kind toward those who are newly escaped from the world and have come to find a refuge with the Almighty and His people.

Watch with ceaseless care over those newborn babes who are strong in desires, though weak in everything else. They have only just crept out of darkness, and their eyes can scarcely bear the light. Let us be a shade to them until they grow accustomed to the blaze of gospel sunshine.

Commit yourselves to the holy work of caring for the feeble and despondent. Peter himself must have felt like a newly enlisted soldier that morning, for he had, in a sense, ended his public Christian life by denying his Lord, and then he began it again when he *“went out, and wept bitterly”* (Luke 22:62). He was now making a new confession of his faith before his Lord and his brothers. Therefore, because he had been thus made to sympathize with recruits, he was commissioned to act as a guardian to them. Young converts are too timid to ask for our help, and so our Lord introduces them to us. With an emphatic word

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of command, He says, “*Feed my lambs.*” This shall be our reward: “*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*” (Matthew 25:40).

However young a believer may be, he should make an open confession of his faith and be enfolded with the rest of the flock of Christ. We are not among those who are suspicious of youthful piety: we could never see more reason for such suspicions in the case of the young than in the case of those who repent late in life. Of the two, we think the latter are more to be questioned than the former, for a selfish fear of punishment and dread of death are more likely to produce a counterfeit faith than mere childishness could.

How much has the child missed that might have spoiled him! How much the child does not know, which, thank God, we hope he never does! Oh, how much brightness and trustfulness there is about children converted to God that is not seen in older converts! Our Lord Jesus evidently felt deep sympathy with children. The man who looks upon children as a trouble in the world and treats them as if they must either be little deceivers or foolish simpletons resembles Christ little.

This joyous privilege of finding out where these young disciples are who are truly the lambs of Christ’s flock is given to you who teach in our schools. To you He says, “*Feed my lambs.*” That means, instruct those who are truly gracious, though young in years.

It is very remarkable that the word used here for “*feed my lambs*” is very different from the word

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employed in the precept, “*feed my sheep*” (John 21:16). I will not trouble you with Greek words, but the second “*feed*” means to exercise the office of a shepherd; to rule, regulate, lead, and manage them; to do all that a shepherd has to do toward a flock. However, this first “*feed*” does not include all that. It distinctively means “to feed.” It directs teachers to a duty that they may, perhaps, neglect—namely, that of instructing children in the faith. The lambs do not need as much keeping in order as we do who know so much, and yet know so little, who think we are so far advanced that we judge one another and contend and emulate. Christian children mainly need to be taught the doctrine, precept, and life of the Gospel: they require to have divine truth put before them clearly and forcibly. Why should higher doctrines, those of grace, be kept back from them? They are not as some say, bones; or if they are bones, they are full of marrow and covered with fatness.

If there is any doctrine too difficult for a child, it is the fault of the teacher’s understanding of it rather than of the child’s power to receive it, provided that the child is really converted to God. It is ours to make doctrine simple; this is to be a main part of our work. Teach the little ones the whole truth and nothing but the truth, for instruction is the great need of the child’s nature.

A child not only has to live as you and I have, but also to grow. Hence, he has double need of food. When fathers say of their boys, “What appetites they have!” they should remember that we also would have great appetites if we had not only to keep the machinery going, but to enlarge it at the same time. Children in

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grace have to grow, rising to greater capacity in knowing, being, doing, and feeling—and to greater power from God.

Thus, above all, children must be fed. They must be well fed, or instructed, because they are in danger of having their cravings perversely satisfied with error. *Youth is susceptible to evil doctrine.* Whether we teach young Christians truth or not, the devil will be sure to teach them error. They will hear of it somehow, even if they are watched by the most careful guardians. The only way to keep chaff out of the child's cup is to fill it to the brim with good wheat. Oh, that the Spirit of God may help us do this! The more the young are taught, the better; it will keep them from being misled.

We are especially exhorted to feed them because they are so *likely to be overlooked*. I am afraid our sermons often go over the heads of the younger folk—who, nevertheless, may be as true Christians as the older ones. Blessed is he who can speak so as to be understood by a child! Blessed is that godly woman who so adapts herself to girlish modes of thought in her class that the truth from her heart streams into the children's hearts without obstruction or hindrance.

We are especially exhorted to feed the young because this work is so *profitable*. Do what we may with persons converted late in life, we can never make much of them. We are very glad of them for their own sakes. But at seventy, what remains, even if they live another ten years? Train up a child, and he may have fifty years of holy service before him. We

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are glad to welcome those who come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, but they have hardly taken up their pruning hook and their spade before the sun goes down and their short day's work is ended. The time spent in training the late convert is greater than the space reserved for his actual service.

On the other hand, take a child convert and teach him well. Just as young piety often becomes eminent piety, that distinguished piety may have a stretch of years of service in which God may be glorified and others may be blessed. Thus, such work is profitable in a high degree.

It is also most beneficial work to ourselves. It exercises our humility and helps to keep us lowly and meek. It also trains our patience. Let those who doubt this try it, for even young Christians exercise the patience of those who believe in them, and who are therefore anxious that their young charges should justify their confidence in them. If you want big-souled, large-hearted men or women, look for them among those who are much engaged among the young, bearing with their follies, and sympathizing with their weaknesses for Jesus' sake.