



TEACH
THEM

diligently

What others are saying ...

How many generations does it take to lose the culture?

According to the Bible — it only takes one.

In her first book, author Leslie Nunnery shines a much-needed light on the struggle many parents are having to pass on a godly legacy to their children. She gets right to a fundamental weakness of Christian parenting in this post-modern era: we have forgotten the importance and the privilege of parenting children today. Nunnery offers highlights from the cautionary tale of the Israelites' poor parenting to illuminate what is happening today in many Christian homes: though God has given us the tools to teach our children, we often fail to use them.

There is no question that we can trust God to keep His promises, and that we can trust that His directives to parent will produce fruit. If you're longing to see fruit in your parenting, be encouraged! God is still at work. *Teach Them Diligently* will remind you of the blessing of walking alongside this next generation with purpose and integrity — but more than that, Nunnery reminds readers of the privilege it is to influence and train the next generation in righteousness.

Heidi St. John, MomStrong International Author
Speaker, Blogger, Executive Director at Firmly
Planted Family



I love Leslie's focus on discipleship-based parenting and her heart to help parents. As parents, we must first be what we want our children to become, and she nails that. If you are looking for a discipleship-based parenting book, you've found a great one.

Kirk Cameron



Clarity, vision, promise ... Leslie Nunnery's book, *Teach Them Diligently: Raising Children of Promise*, restores what

the Enemy has successfully stolen from many of the sons and daughters of God. Within the pages of this book you will find the biblical principles of godly parenting articulated with refreshing resolve. Put Leslie's superb book in your arsenal of parenting weapons as you take up the noble charge of raising the next generation of kingdom-building saints!

Chuck Black, author of the Kingdom Series, Knight Series, and War of the Realms series



Have you ever wished you could have a mentor come alongside you, put an arm around you, and guide you through the task of parenthood? Leslie Nunnery does just that in her new book, *Teach Them Diligently*. This book is real, honest, and encouraging. Grab a cup of coffee, take a deep, relaxing breath, and get ready to be blessed by this inspiring new book.

Israel Wayne, author of *Education: Does God Have an Opinion?*



Leslie Nunnery has great news for parents in the midst of raising children. This book, *Teach Them Diligently*, offers a solid biblical approach to parenting — one that infuses hope in the heart of every parent. This book will start you thinking about how to apply Scripture to everyday situations as you gently point your child toward a loving God. With biblical wisdom and common sense, Leslie encourages you to embrace the high calling of parenthood. You will find help and practical ideas through the pages of this book.

Connie Albers, author and speaker



Parents today are desperate to help our kids take hold of their faith and live a life dependent on Jesus. With so many teens walking away from the faith, we are learning it's not enough

to teach, warn, and restrict. Our kids need to walk alongside us as we teach them to experience the true love of God. This book is the perfect tool to help us navigate the waters of discipling our kids. Through the transparent stories and wisdom of Leslie Nunnery, homeschooling mom of four amazing kids, this must-have resource encourages and equips parents to teach their children diligently through the authentic moments in life.

Kim Sorgius of Not Consumed



As Christian parents, we all desire for our children and teenagers to grow up genuinely loving the Lord and following Him forever. But far too many unfortunate prodigal stories and paralyzing statistics often leave us feeling disheartened, discouraged, and dominated by fear. In her new book, *Teach Them Diligently: Raising Children of Promise*, Leslie Nunnery combats these parenting challenges with biblical hope, encouragement, and faith.

I especially appreciate how Leslie focuses on grace-based parenting, not “sloppy grace” as an excuse for parenting failure, but “solid grace” as God’s foundation for obedience and faith — not trusting in our perfect parenting or striving for perfect kid performance; but instead, honestly believing God’s Word, and placing our total faith in our perfect God. We realize we’re not saved by works, and our kids aren’t saved by perfect parenting; but we also acknowledge that God’s instructions for parents are not just “suggestions” but our real-life how-to manual, written by the Creator of the universe, for the benefit of our families and God’s Kingdom.

As mission-minded families, we know “We can only export what we grow at home.” If we want to be a part of reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we need to begin by raising disciples within the walls of our own homes — discipling our own kids and being disciples ourselves. *Teach Them Diligently* is filled with practical help and

instruction to encourage you to raise your kids to love God and the truth of His Word, based on genuine relationship — not performance or perfection, but knowing the person of God Himself.

Leslie Nunnery is the real-deal — she loves the Lord; she enjoys a God-glorifying life with her husband and children, and she finds direction through prayer — leading others from her knees. When I first heard she was writing a book for families, I was thrilled, as I so greatly respect her as a wonderful woman of God; and as I had the opportunity to read the completed manuscript, I was thankful for her hard work and diligence in providing this wonderful resource.

Ann Dunagan

Speaker/Author of *The Mission-Minded Family*



Encourage others!

Thank you for your time and allowing me to share some insight that has been in my heart for my own family for years. If this book is a blessing to you, would you take a moment and leave a review at Amazon.com, ChristianBook.com, and MasterBooks.com?

It would not only be a blessing for me, but an encouragement for those seeking solutions for their own family!



Leslie Nunnery

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Thank You

Special thanks to my husband, David, who never ceases to amaze me through his love for God, his love and care for our children and me, his wise leadership of our family, and his selfless service of others day in and day out. I thank God for you every single day.

To our children Camden, Payton, Lizzie Gray, and Lila, who are actively taking God's Words and applying them to their hearts and who truly show a growing love for the One who has called them to be His children, too: your love for God and others is a great joy to your daddy and me.

To my parents, Tom and Pat Stultz, there are no words to express my gratitude for the way you modeled godly parenting for Kristin and I. I pray every day that your legacy lives on through our children and countless generations to follow.

To my sister, Kristin, who has always been my idea-bouncer-off-er and dearest friend. I could not imagine anyone I would rather grow up with than you.

And, to the Teach Them Diligently team, you are much more like family than friends. David and I are blessed beyond measure to be able to serve alongside of you.

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Foreword

The book you hold in your hand is the result of many years of God's leading and many individuals pouring their lives into mine. Before I was approached about writing a book on parenting, I had never taken the time to consider just how amazingly blessed our family has been. We have seen God work in all of our lives time and time again. We have had countless mentors who have taken the time to share with us their wisdom and experience, and we have always had access to God's Word, which is the source of all truth. A project I thought would take a few months to complete was actually a lifetime in the making.

It was not too long ago that David and I had the opportunity to fly to Texas for a meeting. On our three-hour return trip, we were seated beside a young couple with an adorable, big-eyed, one-year-old girl in footed pajamas and a big red hair bow. (Yes, we southerners do prefer large hair bows even with PJs when our children are in public.) ☺

As the late evening flight took off, both mom and dad sprang into action. To help their little one stay comfortable and content for the flight, they came prepared with toys, milk, little snacks, and lots of cuddles as they passed her back and forth. Despite how prepared they were to keep her happy, though, she did have a few short episodes of tired frustration, which caused them to be obviously concerned that they were bothering those of us around them. Within a minute or so, however, Mama or Daddy's tender care settled her down, and she was happy and content once again.

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As I watched this young family, I thought how similar that scene was to the larger picture of our raising our children. How often do we come at parenting as prepared as we know how to be, only to hold our breath every time our children act out at all? How many of us live in fear that they will do as we hear of so many others doing and wander from their faith when they are older?

How I hope that as you read through the pages of this book, you will be encouraged by the fact that the fear of losing our children is not even discussed in God's Word. Instead, He gives us instructions on how we as their parents are to set them on the way they should go, and He gives us lots of examples of ways we can trust Him to take care of us and those we love. Yes, we live in a fallen world, and sadly people act like fallen people — a lot. Were that not true, we would never see any exceptions to the inspired Proverb in which we are told to “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). But all of us truly can take heart that God's perfect plan for our families is that our children will be trained well in their youth, and that when they are old enough to start choosing their own way, they will continue in what they have learned. That perfect will is what we all seek. The One who knows our hearts and our children's hearts best is the One we trust. And it is exploring our role in His great plan for our families that this book seeks to do.

I pray that at the end of our time together, you will feel you have a better game plan for parenting your children the way God intended, and that you have a much deeper trust in Him, confident in His ability to hold them close as they grow. For He is strong and mighty, and He loves them with an everlasting love.

Joining you in this journey,
Leslie



Chapter 1

Parenting: God's Great Mystery?

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:4). The heart of most Christian parents yearns to be able to join the Apostle John in this sentiment as they look back over their parenting career. Yet, Satan has effectively denigrated the role of Christian parenting to barely more than a high stakes game of Yahtzee. We roll the dice and see what kind of a score we can muster up.

Is that God's plan for His people, though? Can we not know how to get to what both John and another apostle, Paul, spoke of when they talked of their children in the faith? Has God kept the greatest secret from us, so raising godly children is truly just a game of chance?

Absolutely not!

To make discipleship-based parenting a mystery would be completely inconsistent with the character of God. His ways are perfect, He tells us. His truths stand the test of time. He gave us instructions and principles to build our lives upon, and He gives us all that we need to accomplish what He calls us to do.

So, why are we as Christian parents still uncertain? Why do we live in fear? Why are we losing our children in record numbers? What can we do about it?

Ken Ham and Britt Beemer note in their book *Already Gone* that according to statistics, two-thirds of our children will walk away from their faith, and it is very interesting

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to note that Sunday school and church attendance are not moving those numbers in the right direction. Quite the contrary. They found that those who regularly attend church and Sunday school are actually MORE likely to walk away from their faith. Have we reached the point of no return as parents? Shall we throw our hands up in defeat and just do our best to plug the holes we see as our children sink deeper into Satan's trap? Is raising godly children truly just a game of slim chances where a few will come out right while two-thirds of them won't?

In His Word, God gives us great insight into how we can remove that chance from our parenting. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6:7 that we are to "teach (our children) diligently," and he carefully laid out the blessings that come with following that directive as well as the dangers that come when you don't. When the Israelites received this mandate from the Lord, they were about to finally enter the land that was promised to them so many years earlier. It was critical for them that they pass on to their children all they had seen the Lord do and what they had heard from Him as they left Egypt and while they wandered in the wilderness. In the days ahead, they would be inheriting large and beautiful cities they did not build, houses full of good things they did not work for, and so much more. God was about to bless them beyond measure, but He had expectations that they would pass on all they had seen and learned so they would be able to live peaceably and prosperously in their new land. His promise to them was great blessing for the obedience of walking with Him and teaching their children diligently. Later, in the Book of Proverbs, Solomon in his wisdom tells us to "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (22:6).¹ In these short passages, we see a mandate with a promise that we can build our parenting careers around. And it is that mandate AND that promise that we are going to dive into in the chapters ahead.

Raising Children of Promise

Before we can really look at the “how” we are to prepare ourselves for “what” we are to do as parents, we really need to meditate a bit on the “why” we can count on the promised outcome. If we truly trust in the One who made that promise, then we as parents really just need to dive into what it means for us to teach diligently and train up our children in the way they should go — and we should commit ourselves to that task with every fiber of our being, remembering that our responsibility does not lie in the choices of our children long-term. That’s between them and God. We are to set them on their way to Him, making sure we put no roadblocks up that would hinder them from knowing and loving Him fully.

So, what does the Bible say about God keeping His promises? Can we count on Him to do so even today?

ABSOLUTELY!

First Kings 8:56 tells us that “there hath not failed one word of all his good promise,” and in Romans 4:21, Paul reminds us that we can be “fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.” There is no doubt that God is a promise-keeping God, and that He is able to do all that He says He will. Throughout Scripture, we are reminded that there is nothing too hard for the Lord and that He always keeps His promises. From allowing an old, barren woman to conceive and bear a son, fulfilling a promise made to Abraham many years earlier, to never allowing a widow and her son to run out of oil and flour after she shared her last bit with Elijah, we see a God who is faithful to do what He says He will. The writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 6 that it is “impossible for God to lie” (6:18) and that through Him we have hope as an anchor of our soul.

A mere 28 years or so after Moses gave the Teach Them Diligently mandate to the children of Israel, Joshua reminded them that God had been faithful to all His promises. Joshua, who had been leading them since Moses’ death, notes in his farewell address: “And ye know in all your hearts and in all

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your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof” (Joshua 23:14). Joshua continues, though, to warn them that if they break their covenant with God and follow after other gods, their destruction is sure to follow. Joshua encourages the people to choose whom they will serve, and with one voice, they announce their choice to serve God. They proclaimed and gave Him honor for what He had done in their sight, even though none of them except Joshua and Caleb had actually seen those works firsthand.

Sadly, Joshua’s warnings about what would happen if they were to break their covenant with God came true very shortly after his death. After Joshua and the elders of Israel passed away, another generation rose up “which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10). And they did evil in God’s sight. Astonishingly, just one generation who did not teach their children diligently fundamentally changed the course of history for the children of Israel, and that fact should get all of our attention.

There is no question that we can trust God to keep His promises, and that we can trust that His directives for parenting are for the good of our families and the furtherance of His kingdom. Parenting God’s way will ensure that God’s kingdom goes forward and blessing will be upon His people. It just takes one generation to drop the ball, though, before we start to see our children walking away because they do not know God. Let us not be that generation! Let us rise up as parents to teach our children diligently and trust His promised blessing as the outcome.

A.W. Pink once noted, “Faith is not occupied with difficulties, but with Him with whom all things are possible. Faith is not occupied with circumstances, but with the God of circumstances.”²

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Before we move on to the next chapter and embark on the rest of the book, I encourage you to take a few minutes to meditate on the absolute trustworthiness of our great God. Remind yourself that what He promises, He is able to fulfill, and that no problem, no circumstance, no barrier, no past decisions, and no issue is too hard for Him. You may want to do a topical study on faith, the promises of God, or how trustworthy God is to help you focus your heart and mind on the One who created your family, gave you your precious children, and called you to serve Him as their parents. Commit yourself to the task of parenting them with every ounce of your being, and promise with Joshua, that “as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

Endnotes:

1. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.
2. Arthur W. Pink, *The Life of Elijah* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press, Inc., 2017). Kindle edition.



Chapter 2

The Privilege of the Position

“The thing about parenting rules is there aren’t any. That’s what makes it so difficult.”

— Ewan McGregor, actor

“No matter how much time you spend reading books or following your intuition, you’re gonna screw it up. Fifty times. You can’t do parenting right.”

— Alan Arkin, actor

“I don’t know what’s more exhausting about parenting: the getting up early, or acting like you know what you’re doing.”

— Jim Gaffigan, actor and comedian¹

Sadly, these quotes, intended to be cute and funny, actually give us a good idea of how the role of parenting is viewed in our world today. We have lost the sense that “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world,” as was so beautifully noted in the poem by William Ross Wallace.² As a society, we have replaced that elevated position of parenting with that of a zoo-keeper, and tragically that same mindset has become prevalent among Christians as well.

God’s families must combat that worldview by building our lives and our families on the Word of God and the truths God has given us. We must see our job as parents as just that — a job God has given us to do. And we must approach

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that job with more diligence and preparation than any other position we hold, for our success in the job of parent has much higher stakes than any other job we will ever do. But that position also holds greater benefits than any other we will ever enjoy.

In every career you embark upon, you have a set of duties and jobs you are expected to fulfill. For those who love what they do, those duties and jobs bring great contentment and joy. Have you ever stopped to consider all the amazing duties that fall within your job description as Mom or Dad? As parents, we get to do some pretty amazing things with our children, and I'm not even talking about the fun we have, the company we enjoy, or any of the other physical blessings from having our house full of children.

First and foremost, we are called to love our children. One of the directives older women are given is to teach younger women to love their children. One would think that would come naturally to us moms, and to a large degree it does. But, the fact that older women are told to teach us how to do it indicates that there is a love that is much deeper, much greater than anything we humans are capable of without conscious effort and work. This love will prove to be sacrificial from the first day we welcome our child to the world. That love will require daily devotion and humility as we watch our children grow and develop with the hope of eventually seeing them spread their wings to follow God wherever He may call them. That love will make us lose sleep on their behalf, meet physical needs, talk with, pray for, and even worry about their well-being. That love is an incomprehensible love given by God Himself as the greatest tool we have in carrying out every other element of our job as parents. What a tremendous privilege!

We are instructed to teach our children. We are privileged to be the go-to place for answers where our children are concerned. The “whys and wherefores” of the world they live in are learned from their mom and dad. How amazing is that?

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Deuteronomy 6 tells us to teach our children diligently about things of the Lord, so they will always know the answer to why things are the way they are or why they happened the way they did (Deuteronomy 6:7 and 20). But we are not only given an incredible opportunity to teach them diligently in the ways of the Lord, but we are also given the chance to teach them diligently about all other things as well. Where do children learn their colors? Generally, through conversations with their parents. Where do children learn their ABCs? Most often by singing a little song with their mom and dad. The list of things we are privileged to teach our children is endless: how they think, what they know, how they interact with others, how big their view of the world is. All of those things and more are an offshoot of the teaching they receive from their parents. I stand in awe that God has given me such a high role, don't you?

We are also privileged to train our children. How is this different from teaching them, you ask? It goes deeper. Instead of simply teaching them facts, theories, truths, and so on, we are commanded to point them in the direction they should grow. We, as parents, are the single biggest influences in our children's lives, so their personality, their direction in life, their drive, their character, and more is shaped through their relationship with us. When Solomon directed us to "train up a child in the way he should go," he was giving us a really big responsibility with a really big reward — "when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). This is a concept we'll explore in much greater detail a little later.

As parents, we are also modeling what a true follower of Christ looks like for our children, and they are like little sponges taking everything in and wanting to be just like us. This point was made very clear to me when my older daughter, Lizzie Gray, was but a toddler. As so many have before me, I walked into my bathroom to find my darling little girl covered in makeup. Black mascara had been smeared all over

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her face, along with a combination of other powdered colors she had found in my makeup case. She looked at me proudly, exclaiming, “I look just like you!” After my emotions shifted from horror to amusement, I was struck by the significance of that moment. She clearly had no formal instruction in how to properly apply makeup, yet she had such a desire to emulate me that she did what she could. So it is as our children are growing up. Even before they are old enough for deep conversations about the fine points of our faith, they are seeing faith in action through the lives of their parents, and they will try to model it. How often have your children done or said something based on what they have heard you do or say that was so completely out of context you found yourself embarrassed or trying to explain yourself? That’s the equivalent of Lizzie Gray’s makeup adventure showing up at your church, for our lives provide a walking example for our children to follow day in and day out. And follow us they will.

Next, we have the job of providing for our children. Think of that. When our children are born, they are completely unable to survive in this world. They cannot provide one single thing for themselves. But they are placed in the loving arms of Mom and Dad, and a long-term relationship of trust and provision begins. That child has no choice but to rest in the confidence that Mom and Dad will be there when they need them to be, giving them food, shelter, warmth, clothes, love, and meeting every other physical and emotional need they may have. Second Corinthians 12:14 tells us that it’s a parent’s job to provide for their children, and as parents we can always trust the Lord to make a way for us to do just that.

We are called to nurture our children. Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 make it very clear that we are not to provoke our children, but we are “to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” . . . “lest they be discouraged.” When we nurture our children, we have the incredible opportunity to give them everything they need to grow, develop,

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and flourish into the young men and women God created them to be instead of the rebellious, bitter teens our culture has convinced us is inevitable.

We must responsibly lead our children. It seems that the “zookeeper” mentality we looked at when we started this chapter is not a new way of thinking after all, for throughout the New Testament, Paul notes that those who are serving God must have rule over their own houses as well. But that directive is not exclusively for pastors, elders, and deacons. As believers, we must give sufficient attention to directing that which goes on in our homes. We are largely responsible for instilling discipline, work ethic, modeling self-control, and giving our children a solid foundation to stand on before they launch out into the world of adulthood. That is the polar opposite of merely hanging on for dear life and holding down the fort for 18 years.

Because we know them best, we are called to pray for them the most. In Lamentations 2:19 we are told to “lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children.” Yes, God already knows what our children need, but through praying for them, God shows us parents what our children really need and allows us to come to know them even better. It’s an amazing gift to be able to lift our children before the God who loves them more than we ever could and have Him direct our paths as we fulfill all these other duties for them. By praying specifically for them, God also gives us great insights into their hearts, which allows us to teach and train them much more effectively. He shows us what their needs really are, which helps us as we provide for and nurture them. He helps us see their natural inclinations and fears, which helps us know how to approach them. It is through following the directive to pray for our children that we can most effectively parent them.

Can you believe we get to do all that? I defy you to find another job that offers such a cool set of duties — and I

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haven't even discussed the pay and fringe benefits that come with our position. We truly are most privileged to be able to call ourselves parents.



In the next section of this book, we will be investigating how we as parents should be preparing ourselves to tackle all these responsibilities we have. But, before we do, why don't you take a few minutes to stop and thank God for the privilege of your calling to be a parent? Do you need to confess an attitude that may have been influenced by the prevailing view of parenting in our culture? Talk to God about that now, and ask Him to give you a vision of what His plans for your family really are. Ask Him to make you the parent He created you to be.

Endnotes

1. <http://www.momtastic.com/parenting/541137-40-amazing-quotes-parenthood/>.
2. H.D. Northrop, *Beautiful Gems of Thought and Sentiment* (Boston, MA: The Colins-Patten Co., 1980), <http://www.potw.org/archive/potw391.html>.