The Four Fundamental Principles of the Spiritual Training of Children
(Excerpted from Bringing Up Girls, by Dr. James Dobson)

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1. Talk to your children about the Lord and His mercies continually. This is what Moses told the children of Israel. It is also what King David and the prophet Joel, among other biblical authors, instructed us to do.

2. Begin by teaching your children to pray as early as possible. My parents and grandparents took that responsibility very seriously. The first word I learned to spell was Jesus. And, believe it or not, I began trying to pray even before I learned to talk. I had heard my parents praying during their private devotions, and I began imitating the sounds they made. My mother and father were shocked and wondered how that was possible for a child at thirteen months of age. The moral to the story is that your children are observing you too and are influenced by everything you do.

3. The third component of spiritual training takes us back to King David’s writings. He said in Psalm 119:11, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (KJV). If you want your children to be guided morally when they are beyond your reach and after they are grown, you should be teaching favorite passages to them when they are young. It is amazing how often a relevant biblical reference zings to the surface just when a situation comes up that requires wisdom and discernment. If those verses have not been “downloaded” to our brains, we will have to figure out what to do based on our own limited understanding.

4. “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17, KJV). Prayer is one of God’s most mysterious and remarkable gifts to us. It is our lifeline to heaven, our lifeline to the most holy of relationships, our opportunity to directly express our praises and desires to the Creator of the universe. There is power in this simple act that cannot fully be explained, yet can never be denied. And it is our most effective means of contributing to the welfare of our children.