

Preface

Olive plants and promises? Yes! Your children will be like *olive plants* around your table. According to Psalm 128:3, if children are properly nourished and cultivated, they will become strong, mature, enduring and fruitful like the wondrous olive tree that faithfully yields its most welcome goodness season after season. The general promises from the psalmist speak of future growth, the natural response of good nurturing.

Children who are raised according to the biblical mandate have a much greater likelihood of trusting and serving the Lord in their adult years than those who are not taught to revere the Lord in their youth. This book assumes that you have lead, or are leading your children toward salvation in Jesus Christ. If you desire guidance in that process, there are recommendations for reading at the end of this preface.¹ Instead of an evangelism tool, this book is written primarily for Christian parents as guidance, hope and encouragement for successful, godly parenting.

Too often parents assume their children are saved because of a Christian home environment and church attendance during their formative years. Unlike ethnicity, however, Christianity is not hereditary, nor can it be gained through spiritual osmosis. It has been said many times that God has no grandchildren, meaning that every individual must receive Jesus as Lord and Savior for himself in order to receive God's gracious gift of salvation. Your personal salvation in no way guarantees the salvation of your offspring, but it should motivate you to lead your children to the Lord, to mold them in the way they should grow, and

to pray for God's blessing, guidance and protection upon their lives.

Just as the healthy olive tree releases its coveted oil in nature's appointed time, God promises to release the anointing (gifting that is out of the ordinary) upon your believing children to empower, equip, motivate and inspire them to serve Him under the most difficult and seemingly impossible circumstances. It is the God-given anointing that will make them soul winners according to the mandate of the Great Commission.

*Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
Within your house,
Your children like olive plants
Around your table (Ps 128:3).*

*...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth
(Acts 1:8).*

By divine grace, all believers (God's *olive plants*) can grow into mighty trees of righteousness, provided the *plants* submit to the *Master Gardener's* expert cultivation. Though this book is written primarily for parents, these truths will speak of the future growth God desires to see in all believers. Though we are not all parents, as believers, we are all children of God. If you are not a parent, please continue reading because as a child of God, you will also find these words edifying. God desires growth in ALL of His precious olive plants.

The essence of this book is *hope*, but not the fleeting hope offered by this world. In Greek, the original language of the New Testament, the word for

hope is *elpis* (ἐλπίς). The word has a much richer significance than its English cousin, which has come to mean little more than wishful thinking. Biblical hope expresses the concept of pleasurable, favorable, confident expectation concerning the unseen and the future, the happy anticipation of the good (like healthy, ripe fruit on the olive tree!).² True hope exhorts believers to expect with desire and to expect the best. It means to cherish a desire or a promise from God with the expectation of obtaining it. The Greek *elpis* is the opposite of *despair*.

The Word of God declares that believers are *prisoners of hope* (Zech 9:12), a hope from which we never want to escape. One must wait patiently for the realization of hope and divine promises (fruitfulness) with joyful anticipation. Like faith, biblical hope is substantive, but it can only be seen with eyes of faith. “*Who hopes for what he already has? Hope that is seen is no hope at all* (Rom 8:24).” I challenge godly parents to develop biblical hope for their children and to realize that there is no such thing as a hopeless situation in the life of a believer.

It is my earnest prayer that as a Christian, you will be filled with joyful anticipation through the symbolic imagery of the olive tree to which the Creator has wisely compared godly offspring. I also pray that if you are not a Christian, you will benefit from the wisdom of Scripture that serves as the basis for this topic, and that you will desire to know the God of heaven as Lord and Savior. As you turn from your sins (we are all sinners save by grace), and toward the Lord Jesus, the promises of His great book will become yours also.

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift
of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23).*

Notes:

[1] Ted Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA, Shepherd Press, 1995).

Ray Comfort, *How to Bring Your Children to Christ and Keep Them There* (Bartlesville, OK, Genesis Publishing Group, 2005).

Daniel H. Smith, *How to Lead a Child to Christ* (Chicago, IL, Moody Publishers, 1987).

[2] W. E. Vine, M.A., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville, Tennessee, Royal Publishers, Inc., n.d.).