

**SAMPLE READING****TRANSFORMING  
children  
INTO SPIRITUAL  
CHAMPIONS****Chapter 8****It's Time to Produce Some Spiritual Champions**

Children often need reassurances that they are loved by those whom they trust and depend upon. My oldest daughter loves to ask challenging questions of her mother and me. Several years ago, while spending a laid-back Saturday lounging around the house, she wandered into my study where I was working at the computer.

"Daddy," she began innocently, "do you love me?"

After turning away from the computer to give her my full attention, I affirmed that she was more important to me than anything else in the world and that I loved her very dearly. She smiled and then let loose the big one.

"How do I know you really love me?"

Ah, the thoughts that went racing through my mind. <em>Let's see. I wiped your poopy behind every day for two years, ran a car into the ground carting you to sports practices, spent hours awake late at night holding you or calming you when you had earaches or stomachaches, spent more money than I'd care to tally on special adventures and events, played silly games until I couldn't bear it any longer, and so on.

"I hug you and kiss you and tell you all the time how much I love you," I replied.

"Yeah, but how do I know you really mean it?" she pressed forward, digging for the golden nugget of truth.

"I work really hard to make the money that provides your food, clothing, home and toys."

"Yeah, but you have to do that. That's what every parent has to do, but that doesn't mean you love me."

I invited her to sit on my lap while I told her the ultimate, indisputable way that she could know that I loved her more than anything else on the planet. "Buddy, I do everything I can to try to raise you up to be the woman that God made you and wants you to be. There is nothing more important than that you love, obey and serve God with all your heart, mind, strength and soul. And I do everything I can to help you be a little girl who grows up to be a big girl who is God's pleasing and faithful servant. There's nothing more special that any parent can do than to help his or her child honor God; and I will never stop trying to do the things that bring you closer to Him. That's more important than buying you nice clothes or giving you a cell phone, than letting you see every movie you want to see or giving you the biggest room in the house. I really want God and other people throughout the world to be blessed by who you are."

Her big, dark eyes continued to stare intently into mine for a few seconds after I finished delivering my best shot. Then she pursed her lips, grinned, nodded her head up and down a few times, and simply said, "Okay," and went bounding out of the room. She has never asked me that question again. I hope it is because she sensed the truthfulness and sincerity of my reply.

**A Shared Goal**

Each of us who has the privilege of relating to young children these days shares a special goal: to help transform those children into spiritual champions. It will not happen by accident. It may not happen even if we devote our best resources to that task, but the possibility is worth the risk. In fact, this isn't really a risk at all since our personal success in life is completely wrapped up in our willingness to nurture these young people.

If you have not yet reached the point of embarrassment over the fact that most adults—perhaps even you—abdicate your children's moral and spiritual development to illegitimate usurpers of that responsibility (e.g., schools, the media, legislatures, judges and even churches), then I pray that the Holy Spirit will heighten your sensitivity to this travesty with all due haste. We have no right to complain about how our children develop if we are not heavily and purposefully investing in those outcomes. Those who fill the gap in our absence are mere substitutes for us when we don't pull our weight. If we default on our responsibility, we cannot blame those substitutes for making the most of the opportunity. This is, after all, part of the battle for the minds and hearts of humanity.

I pray that in the years to come you will seize the opportunities that God provides to you, as a committed disciple of Jesus Christ, to enable your home and those of other believers to be places of victory in the turbulent and relentless spiritual battle for those young hearts, minds and souls. May your household provide a nurturing environment of faith, love and spiritual growth so that the emerging generation of America's children will be all that their creator intends them to be.