

Reflection Questions for
RAISING THEM RIGHT:
A Saint's Advice on Raising Children
by Theophan the Recluse

Session 1: Life of St. Theophan & Chapter 1
Session 2: Chapter 2
Session 3: Chapter 3
Session 4: Chapter 4
Session 5: Chapter 5
Session 6: Chapter 6
Session 7: Chapter 7

The following set of reflection questions were developed by Presbytera Helene Hall Fall of 1992 for the St. Macrina Study Group / Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church / Akron, Ohio.

St. Macrina's meets weekly during the school year to learn more about the Orthodox faith. Various texts and taped lectures have been used, including

1. Partakers of Divine Nature by Archimandrite Christoforos Stavropoulos & translated by Fr. Dr. Stanley Harakas
2. Our Hearts True Home edited by Virginia Nieuwsma
3. Of Life and Salvation Fr. Stanley Harakas
4. Way of the Ascetics by Tito Colliander
5. Videotape of Fr. Thomas Hopko: "God's People at Work - Being Christian in the Modern World"
6. A Year of the Lord [5 volumes] Bible Study by Fr. Ted Stylianopoulos
7. Beginning to Pray by Archbishop Anthony Bloom

RAISING THEM RIGHT Reflection Questions

Session 2: Chapter 2 - Baptism: The Adult and the Child

Content Questions

1. What happens to us inwardly as a result of baptism?

2. How does sin affect us AFTER baptism?

3. How does grace function for a baptized infant as he/she matures into adulthood?

4. List the characteristics of one who is "dwelling in grace."

5. What does St. Theophan list as the "saving atmosphere around the infant"?

For Reflection:

1. How does one exercise his "powers of spirit and body" in a way to work not for sin but for the service of God?

2. How does the last sentence of the chapter make me feel?

3. Think of a time in your own life when after receiving communion you received a physical or spiritual healing.

4. How do my own children react to the presence of holy items, blessings, sign of the cross, etc? You may cite specific instances.

RAISING THEM RIGHT: Reflection Questions **Session 3: Chapter 3 - The Developing Child**

Content Questions

1. What are the 3 fundamental things that draw us toward sin?
2. On page 30 the author mentions three things that protect the child. List them.

For Reflection

1. Can you describe an instance when you were denied something as a child and benefited from that experience in your adult life?
2. What are some ways that the children are trained in my own family?
3. Can you think of a first impression in your childhood that was spiritual? What impact did/does it have on your life?
4. What are some concrete ways that we can make clear for ourselves what it is that sin desires?

RAISING THEM RIGHT: Reflection Questions

Session 4: Chapter 4 - Forming Attitudes

Content Questions

1. What are the 3 powers within us that form our attitudes?
2. What does the saint say about truth vs. worldly thinking?
3. How do the 3 things that belong to the spirit work together? With this in mind, how can we influence our own children's spirits?

For Reflection

1. How can we teach our children to deny themselves?
2. St. Theophan asks us to "give commands in such a way that children are not forced to be transgressors of their wills." Can you cite an example of this in your own parenting experience?
3. What do I want to do this week to influence my children's spirits?

RAISING THEM RIGHT: Reflection Questions

Session 5: Chapter 5 - The Years of Youth

Content Questions

1. How does St. Theophan describe how one becomes or finds himself a Christian? [p.46]
2. What are St. Theophan's words for consciously dedicating oneself to God? Can we argue a difference between this and the Protestant term "born again"? What does "born again" mean to Orthodox Christians?
3. What are the spiritual dangers of adolescence?
4. Why is consciousness of one's faith a precarious position?

For Reflection

1. How does our family encourage the study of faith and works of piety? Is this given precedence over other instruction?
2. We have a single spirit that receives both faith and learning. Give an example of how to integrate Orthodoxy into everyday learning.

RAISING THEM RIGHT: Reflection Questions **Session 7: Chapter 7 - Preserving God's Grace**

Summary and Reflection

1. What does the saint say are the causes of a "fruitless" life even though attention was given to the upbringing?
2. Of the fruits of godliness, wholeness, liveliness, evenness, joyfulness, and unshakably, which do we see most in our children? Which one of these characteristics do we struggle with the most in ourselves?
3. Upbringing can "wilt as a flower in a warm place." Is there a "warm place" in my children's lives that I can change?
4. St. Theophan remarks that someone unprepared "does not want to hear the final truth of his aim in life or the means of it." As a result of this study, what are my means to achieve my aim in life?