Lesson 1: Homeland Security

1. Mark Twain had a simple philosophy about child-raising: "Things run along smoothly until your kid reaches thirteen . . . That's when you need to stick 'em in a barrel, hammer down the lid, and feed 'em through the knothole. And then, when they turn sixteen, plug up the knothole!" Although said tongue-in-cheek, Twain's advice doesn't work. First, the knothole routine of feeding won't work on a child who can clean out a refrigerator in ten minutes. Second, things don't "run along smoothly" until they turn thirteen . . . Are you kidding? The truth: it's hard being a parent. Discuss the challenges of different ages/stages of raising children: infant, toddler, grade-school years, pre-teens, teens, college age, etc.

2. Why do you think this Biblical subject is so avoided?

3. **Proverb 22:6** is a truism – a *general* truth that *generally* works. It doesn't argue exceptions. **Ezekiel 18** illustrates that good parents can have rebellious children (vv. 5-13). At the same time, lousy parents can have godly children (v. 14). How does the principle of individual choice (free moral agency) bear upon raising children?

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4.	It's easy for parents of children that turn out well to take all the credit. On the other hand, it's easy for parents of rebellious children to take all the blame. Where is the healthy balance?
5.	How important is it in the early years of a child's life to "create a desire" in their heart for God? Discuss some practical ways to do that.
6.	A "smother-mother" is one that refuses to allow her child to grow up independently (co-dependency). On the other hand, a "my-little-angel-can-do-no-wrong daddy" turns a blind eye to reality. Each is an extreme. What are some ways we can avoid both extremes?
7.	Name something your parents or grandparents did that influenced you at an early age.
8.	What kind of "riches" does Solomon have in mind in Proverbs 24:3-4 ?