

## Train Up a Child

Our family recently hosted guests who were making a presentation at our church on a Sunday. The guests included the parents, two young boys, and a four-footed guest, Xare. Xare is an English Labrador who performs his duties as a service dog to a child with autism. We occasionally had pets in our home, but none were as impressive as Xare. The service dog was trained to protect the child from harm and provide comfort when he is stressed. The dog is trained to help a child cross the street safely. He doesn't allow the child to step into the street until given the verbal command to do so. Around the house, Xare is amazingly patient and quiet. At the table, he sits at the feet of the child. He doesn't beg for food scraps like other dogs. If you tell him to get up, he complies immediately. Whatever you ask him to do, he does so without hesitation. I have never seen a more compliant animal – human or otherwise, than Xare. He is simply amazing. Watching Xare perform gave me a new appreciation for the importance of training.



While dogs often exhibit loyalty and love for their master, Xare is much more than that. Beginning at birth, he was trained to be a service dog. During the first six months of his life, he stayed close to his mother, but then he was placed into a very specialized training program for the next three years. He was taught by being rewarded for positive actions. Doggie treats are the reward for performing well. The dog learned to listen and comply with spoken commands. And, Xare is protective of the autistic child. He is simply amazing.

As parents, we have the opportunity to train our children in all aspects of life, including their faith journey. Training involves discipline, reward, and love. It also consists in modeling good behavior and placing the child in a good environment. Without training and positive discipline, having a child in the house would be like having a pet.

Xare has always lived in a unique environment with diligent training to prepare him for a life of service. Raising children is more complicated than training a service dog. We can't protect our children every minute of every day, and we can't choose our kid's friends. *"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). We give our children a chance at a blessed and productive life if we are diligent in our efforts.

**The Bible Says:** "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4).

**Question:** How can you lead children and grandchildren to grow in the faith and all aspects of their life?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord. We pray that we can train our children and grandchildren to be faithful to You and to accept guidance from parents and those in authority. Amen.