

**2024 Valley Bible Church Parenting Workshop**  
**Class 1 – Introduction and “Successful” Christian Parenting**

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**Introduction**

What do parents hope for their children? Perhaps parents want their children to be nurtured in the womb, be born healthy, get into the best preschool or be homeschooled throughout, be popular, get invited to all the best birthday parties, get good grades, have fame in academics and/or athletics, get into a good college or trade school with a full-ride scholarship, get a good job, have financial security, find a good spouse (... who makes a lot of money, comes from a good family, gets along with you, etc.), buy a house with a white picket fence... in Lancaster (or where you'd like to move), give you lots grandchildren, etc.

**What are your aspirations for your children?  
How does that manifest in your family priorities?**

In order to fulfill their hopes for their children, parents can try various methods. Some parents might jump from one method to another as their children are not responding to a particular method. Parents can be desperate for their children to experience their definition of “success”. During, or even before starting the parenting journey, parents can develop deep convictions regarding parenting formulas. Here are some examples:

- Baby feeding methods: schedule vs. demand, breast vs. bottle, etc.
- Education methods: public school, secular private school, Christian private school, charter school, public school homeschooling, Christian homeschooling, etc.
- Discipline methods: strict, lenient, child directed, parent directed, spanking, timeouts, only positive, etc.
- “Christian” methods: “Biblical Parenting University”, “Parenting by the Book”, “Nurturing God’s Way”, “Growing Kids God’s Way”, family integrated church, etc.

In some cases, these methods in-and-of themselves are not bad. However, others are non-biblical. Additionally, poor Biblical interpretation and/or application can move parents to trust the methodology rather than God Himself. It can also move parents to be legalistic regarding the methodology and/or judgmental to other parents who do not employ the same methodologies. Parents can also be tempted to believe that by pushing the right buttons they can be successful at parenting. Yet, good (Biblical) parenting is not determined by methods.

**Where do you place your trust for your parenting?**

**The Big Assumption**

Everything that we going to study over the next four weeks assumes that you have confessed to God that you are a sinner, that you have repented of your sin, and that you have trusted only in Christ for salvation from sin, surrendering your life to Him.

If you have done that then you have been born again, forgiven, and released from slavery to sin; and the power of sin over you has been broken. You also have access to power through the Holy Spirit to live consistently to the glory of God. And you have the ability to have an ever-increasing experience of the fruits of the Spirit as you walk in the Spirit.

**Have you surrendered your life to Christ?**

**The Parent's Source of Truth and Authority**

There are a lot of “authorities” on parenting. Yet, as believers, our ultimate authority is the Word of God. The Bible is the inspired, plenary, verbal, infallible, inerrant in the original manuscripts Word of God. God is the source of Scripture and as such it takes on His qualities of inerrancy (without error) and infallibility (trustworthy).

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is **breathed out by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17).

The Bible being inspired means that the authors “were moved by the Holy Spirit” to write the words of Scripture (2 Pet 1:21; Acts 1:16; 1 Cor 2:13). This inspiration is verbal (extending to the very words) and plenary (including all the words) (Matt 5:18; 22:31-32; Gal 3:16).

The Bible is authoritative (Matt 4:4, 7, 10) and fully sufficient for salvation and sanctification (Matt 5:18; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:20-21). It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks (2 Pet 1:3; Matt 4:4; Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 1 Pet 2:2; Psa 19:7-13; 119:9, 11; 119:24).

The correct hermeneutic is the normal or plain, literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation. This method takes the plain literal sense while understanding the historical, immediate, and wider contexts; type of literature; and the uses of figures of speech. The consistent application of this hermeneutic to all of Scripture is needed to correctly understand Scripture. Also, Christians are free from the Old Testament Law (see the VBC position paper “The Christian’s Obligation to the Law of Moses”).

**What is your personal source of authority?**

**Old Testament and New Testament Differences**

It is critically important to understand the Old and New Testament differences regarding children. In the Old Testament, God promised to bless godly Israelites with children.

<sup>11</sup>You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today. <sup>12</sup>“**And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them**, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. <sup>13</sup>**He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb** and the fruit of your ground, ... <sup>14</sup>**You shall be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you** or among your livestock. (Deut 7:11-14)

God has not made this promise to those under the New Covenant, Christians. Unfortunately, many within conservative evangelicalism apply Old Testament promises to believers today. This is wrong (see VBC position paper “The Christian’s Obligation to the Law of Moses”).

We need to understand that all Scripture is *for* us (for our encouragement and instruction – Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11), but not all Scripture is *to* us. Some promises are not for believers today, and this is one of them. Couples who desire children and who are unable (or this far unable) to have children should never conclude that they are somehow missing God’s blessing, or they are somehow cursed or being punished by God. That is bad interpretation.

In addition, believers should never, through attitude or words, make their brothers and sisters feel second-class because they do not have children. God in His sovereignty has a different plan for this couple – a plan for His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11) and their sanctifying good (Rom 8:28-29).

**Do you strive to be graciously sensitive to those around you?**

### **Biblical Parenting Commands and Principles**

Biblical parenting precepts and principles are actually quite simple, at least to understand. Biblical parenting commands are all general commands. For example:

<sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:4)

Not provoking your children to anger and bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord and are all unspecified in how to do it. The application of the command is an area of freedom. Your choice of application is determined by the situation you find yourself in, the personality and pliability of your children, your spiritual maturity, wisdom and judgment, your personality, your talents, etc.

Parents are called to apply these commands specifically in their own family situations. For one believer to tell another that they must apply a command a specific way is *legalism*. For one believer to look down on another for how they apply a general command is *judgmentalism*. We will strive to avoid both of those during our workshop.

**What opinions have you elevated to the level of Biblical commands? How do you judge others for their decisions?**

### **The Most Important Thing**

It can be tough to be a parent. Sleepless nights, inconsolable child, night terrors, rebellion at any age, concerns of the health and safety of your children... No matter how many friends you have and how close your relatives live to you, when your angel throws himself down in the grocery store aisle screaming and kicking because you say “no”, it’s just you, your child, and God. At that moment, you need to have your life purpose firmly grounded in your mind.

**What are some of the hard things of parenting?**

The most important thing for the Christian life, including parenting, is to commit to glorify God as your highest purpose... no matter what. Your life purpose is the central motivating aim of your life. It is the underlying reason for everything you do. The follower of Christ has been reconciled to God and can now fulfill their purpose – to glorify God (Isa 43:6-7).

You have been formed and made, created by God to glorify Him. This is your ultimate purpose. If you have surrendered your life to Christ, then you do not need to “find” your purpose in life. You have THE purpose – to glorify God. Glorifying God is your one overarching purpose, your one supreme purpose that is to be your motivating aim, your one underlying reason for everything you do that guides life decisions, influences behavior, shapes goals, is your direction, and is your meaning.

<sup>31</sup>So, ... whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor 10:31)

The commitment to glorify God must be your greatest desire, your highest purpose, your highest priority. More important than anything else. No matter how good things are or bad they are. No matter how you feel.

“Glorifying God” can sound nebulous. How do I practically do that?

You glorify God when those around you can look at you and see God’s character. You glorify God when His character and marvelous works are on display (declared) in your life – in heart motives, thoughts, words, and deeds (Psa 19:1; Ex 33:17-19; Rom 1:20; 1 Chron 16:23-25a; Matt 5:16).

Said more simply... Glorifying God is displaying His character in your regenerated and progressively sanctified life.

Said even more simply... You glorify God when people see Christ living through you.

Some ways to glorify God that are applicable in your parenting are: by abiding in Christ and bearing much fruit (John 15:4-8); by confessing sin (Josh 7:19-21); by Spirit-filled prayer (John 14:13); by humility (Acts 12:21-23); by believing what God says (Rom 4:19-21); by living in harmony with the brethren (Rom 15:5-6); by accepting brethren with differing opinions in areas of freedom (Rom 15:7); by sexual purity (1 Cor 6:18-20); by faithful stewardship (2 Cor 9:13); by holing living among unbelievers (1 Pet 2:12); by serving the body of Christ (1 Pet 4:10-11); by faithfulness when persecuted (1 Pet 4:16).

Displaying God’s glory must be more important than any difficult circumstance or sin you may be struggling with. A commitment to glorify God means His will (His Word) will be most important in your life and you will desire to press, strive, stretch, and work hard to please Him.

**How will glorifying God as your highest purpose/priority impact your parenting?**

## Definition of “Successful” Christian Parenting

For many people “success” drives them. The feeling of satisfaction that comes from being successful motivates them. But to be successful, you need to meet a standard or goal.

**Fill in the blank...**  
**If \_\_\_\_\_ happened, I would feel successful as a parent.**

Many of us probably think that if we are successful as Christian parents, then our children will become believers. We will be blessed to lead them in the prayer of salvation, and they will desire to be involved in the things of God through jr. high, high school, young adulthood, and beyond. And along with surrendering to Christ at a young age, there will be the safety that comes from not making bad decisions (some that maybe we made) in their life.

Many Christian parents have children who are not where they want them to be: maybe they have not bowed before Jesus as Lord and Savior; maybe they have not matured in their walk with Christ; maybe they are ambivalent to the things of God; or maybe they have actively rebelled against God.

We must understand at the heart-level that salvation is not ours to impart to our children. We cannot cause our children to become believers, grow in their walk, or have a hunger for God and His word. This comes from God.

<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9)

<sup>5</sup>What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup>I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup>So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only **God who gives the growth.** (1 Cor 3:5-7)

This is a critical principle in your parenting. It removes false guilt associated with not meeting an impossible performance goal for your children.

*Successful parenting is NOT measured by the child’s response,  
but by the faithfulness of the parents to God and His Word.*

**What is true about all the relationships in your life?  
Who owns those people? What does that mean for you?**

Look at what the Scriptures say about God’s ownership.

<sup>1</sup>The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it. (Psa 24:1 NAS95)

God owns everything. He owns the earth, and He owns the people in it. There is nothing that exists in the physical universe and the heavens that God does not own.

God owns everything including your spouse and children. You own nothing. Therefore, you have been entrusted with a stewardship over those people and relationships.

**Do you view your children as a stewardship?**

Stewards own nothing. They are simply called to be faithful with what has been entrusted to them. As a parent, you are called to be a faithful steward of your children.

<sup>2</sup>Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. (1 Cor 4:2)

<sup>23</sup>His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’(Matt 25:23)

**Are you striving to be faithful?**

**The Power to be a “Successful” Christian Parent**

Faithfulness is the result of walking in the Spirit, of living filled by the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through you. Living a consistently God glorifying life is only possible through Spirit-filling. The Christian life is not lived in the believer’s own strength. It is a life lived filled with the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through you.

<sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ...

<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, **faithfulness**, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Gal 5:16-17, 22-24)

<sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

If you desire your parenting to be God honoring yet attempt to parent apart from the power that God supplies through the filling of the Spirit, you are destined to failure.

God has described Spirit-filling in the Scriptures in several ways to allow us to fully understand it. Spirit-filling is described as “abiding in Christ” (John 15:1-11); “setting apart Christ as Lord in your heart” (1 Pet 3:15); “living by faith in the Son of God” (Gal 2:20); and “presenting your bodies a living and holy sacrifice” (Rom 12:1-2).

The classic passage is found in Ephesians 5:18+.

<sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but **be filled with the Spirit**, <sup>19</sup>addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup>giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. ... (Wives..., Husbands..., Children..., Fathers..., Slaves..., Masters...) (Eph 5:18-6:9)

“Be filled” has the sense of being influenced. The contrast is clear; someone who is drunk is under the influence of alcohol – they have surrendered control to alcohol. Believers should only be influenced by the Spirit.

**What do you allow yourself to be influenced by?**

The Greek for “filled” is a passive, present tense imperative (something that you are commanded to continually let happen to you). It is literally “let yourselves be kept being filled with the Spirit”. The implication is that the usual, expected position of the believer is to be filled with the Spirit, under the influence of the Spirit.

The believer in a right relationship with God will be filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is the surrendering of every area of your life to God so that the Holy Spirit is influencing your behavior. Being filled with the Spirit is equivalent to letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you.

<sup>16</sup>**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (Wives..., Husbands..., Children..., Fathers..., Slaves..., Masters...) (Col 3:16-4:1)

The filling of the Spirit is not some magical, super-spiritual experience. It occurs when you bring your entire life under submission to God. The fruit of this filling is a tangible manifestation of strength, character, and your connection to God through Christ.

Walking in the Spirit is a moment-by-moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin (Eph 4:29-32); yield yourself to God’s word (1 Thess 5:19-20); and allow the word to richly dwell within you (Col 3:16-4:1). When a believer is submitted to God (Eph 5:18-6:9) and His Word (Col 3:16-4:1), the indwelling Holy Spirit fills (or influences) them and produces Christ-like character, heart motives, attitudes, words, and reactions (e.g., faithfulness, patience, kindness, loving, forgiving, truthful, etc.). All other role-commands are consistently, God-glorifyingly possible only by Spirit-filling.

**What if I Have not Been Faithful?**

What if you discover you have not been faithful in your parenting? If you have not been faithful, then commit to repent. Turn from sin, have your mind renewed by the Word of God, and commit to do righteousness – now be faithful (Eph 4:21-24).

Repentance will be demonstrated by sorrow, earnestness, vindication, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and avenging of wrong (2 Cor 7:11). Repentance is not about feeling bad, but about turning from what you were doing with zeal and energy and choosing to do righteousness with zeal and energy. It is about striving to make right what you did wrong.

**Are you committed to glorify God by being faithful?**

Once you repent, then come before the throne of grace to receive help to be faithful.

<sup>16</sup>Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4:16)

### **Summary**

The follower of Christ has the resources to be successful in their parenting. They have connection to Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. They have the Word of God. They have everything they need to be faithful to God and His Word in their parenting.

### **Discussion Scenarios**

Discuss the following scenarios with your table. We will discuss as a group afterwards

Scenario #1 – It has been two weeks since you came home with your bundle of joy. You both are exhausted. A Christian friend tells you that it is unbiblical to not constantly console your fussy newborn because God provides constant care to you. Another Christian friend tells you that it is unbiblical to comfort your child when she cries because the Father did not take Jesus down from the cross when He cried out. What do you do? What do you tell your friends? How might you best glorify God in this situation?

Scenario #2 – The “terrible twos” started before two and it is now going on four. Life is difficult. You are angry, short tempered, and impatient with your child and spouse. How might you best glorify God in this situation?

Scenario #3 – Your 16-year-old wants to start driving. This would actually help the family since they could take your little ones to their events. You have the financial resources available and there is nothing in their life that would cause you to not allow this to happen other than being a normal middle-teens teenager. But you are terrified of what might happen, the accident that might happen, the trouble they might get into, etc. How might you best glorify God in this situation?



### **Additional Study**

Read Psalm 1 and answer the following:

Describe the person who has the law of the Lord as their delight.

Is God's Word your delight?

What would need to change to demonstrate that God's Word is your delight?

Who are your closest confidants and influences?

Are they people who focus you on God's Word or move you away from it?

Read Psalm 127 and 128 and answer the following:

Note every principle on parenting and marriage that you can find.

What is the most important thing in your life?

How do you view children?

What do you view as your responsibility regarding children?

Do you fear (reverential awe) God?

How is the family blessed who fears the Lord?