

2024 Valley Bible Church Parenting Workshop Topic 2 – The Focus of the Christian Home

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Introduction

What is the Christian parent's source of authority? – The Bible.

How would you explain moral and non-moral issues? – Moral issues are biblical commands; non-moral issues are areas of freedom.

What can be a temptation when applying Biblical general commands? – The application of general commands is an area of freedom so legalism and judgmentalism are temptations.

What is your purpose in parenting and how important is that? – To glorify God which impacts everything about parenting.

What is the definition of successful Christian parenting? – Successful parenting is not measured by the child's response, but by the faithfulness of the parents to God and His Word.

Where does the believer get power to be successful in their parenting? – The Holy Spirit

Any changes in your thoughts on parenting since last week?

There are many things we can say from the Word of God that are central to a believing parent's household. Some things we cannot... We can't say how clean or organized your house has to be. We can't tell you how long dishes can sit in the sink before they must be washed. We can't say that your house has to be drop-in-ready all the time. We can't say how often you need to get the mail. We can't say how pristine your yard or cars have to be. We can't tell you what kinds of medicines are ok for you to take or give to your children. We can't tell you what kinds of foods you can have in your house (organic, GMO, etc.).

Those are areas of freedom that you need to decide what is best for your family. You must also not place your decision on others as a requirement, nor judge others for making a different decision. But we can define the goal of parenting and some ways to pursue that.

The Goal of Parenting

The purpose of every believer (parent) is to glorify God (1 Cor 10:31).

The mission of every believer (parent) is to make disciples. Jesus' command is to each of us.

¹⁹Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt 28:19-20)

This is your primary goal in parenting – to make disciples of your children – to be faithful to proactively *live* and *speak* the gospel. You have the hope to one day see your children turn from self and self-effort and trust Christ alone for salvation from sin, to see them publicly identify themselves with Christ, and then to see them taught them all that Christ commanded.

What do you view as your child's greatest need?

Your child's greatest need is salvation from the penalty and power of sin (Rom 6:23; Eph 2:1-3). Salvation is not by good works, moral living, religious ritual or observance, church membership, or heredity. Your children are not forgiven for their sins through your faith.

Saving faith is individually required. God gives salvation to all who exercise the gift of true saving faith – all who repent from sin, deny self and self-effort, forsake all, and trust Christ alone for salvation from sin. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!

Caution 1 – You must completely understand that salvation is not yours to impart to our children. You cannot cause your children to become believers, grow in their walk, or have a hunger for God and His word. Guilt over your children not responding to spiritual things the way you want is false guilt associated with not meeting an impossible performance goal for your children.

Caution 2 – It is your responsibility to faithfully live and speak the gospel to and before your children. But God has also given that responsibility to brethren within the ministries of the local church. You should not abandon your part, nor should you prevent the part that God provides through the local church. God uses diverse means to make disciples of His elect.

Caution 3 – Christian parents desire so very much to see their children come to faith. It gives us no greater joy (3 John 4). And so, you must be very careful to not use pressure or approval to coerce or manipulate your children into making a false profession. Even if they do make a profession at a young age, only time will tell if they are truly regenerate.

Today, we will look at four focus areas of the Christian home in being faithful to live and speak the gospel to your children.

Strive towards spiritual maturity

It is important in the Christian household that parents are striving for spiritual maturity.

How do you define spiritual maturity?

We each might have an idea about that. Some may think it is all about knowing more about God or the Scriptures. Some might think it is all about the things you do in serving at church. Let's look at the words of Jesus.

²¹Whoever **has my commandments and keeps them**, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and **manifest (disclose – NAS)** myself to him.” (John 14:21)

Jesus will “manifest” Himself to His disciples who do two things. “Manifest” means to make visible or lay open to view. Jesus will make visible or lay open to view more of himself. The thought is increasing levels of intimacy. The disciple who has Jesus' commands and does them will know Jesus at increasing levels of intimacy and understanding.

This is being progressively transformed into Christ's image (2 Cor 3:18) or made spiritually mature. Spiritual growth is progressively having your character, motives, thoughts, words, and deeds be more like Jesus. Getting closer and closer to Jesus over time.

Jesus says that there are two things that bring about this transformation. First is having His commands. This is the Bible. In John 17:17 Jesus prayed for us to be sanctified, transformed, made more mature. The means of sanctification is the Word of God.

¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)

Peter says something similar.

²like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that **by it you may grow in respect to salvation**, (1 Pet 2:2 NAS95)

It is by the Word of God that you grow spiritually. So, you need to be taking in the Word of God. But how much? That is up to you. Definitely some and not none. The excuse often heard for not taking in the Word is not having time. This is particularly true of parents who work long hours inside and outside the home. However, the reality is that if you spend just 10 minutes a day, you can read the entire Bible in one year. If you read the New Testament for 5 min a day, you can read the entire New Testament in four months.

How much TV do you watch? How much video gaming, computer playing/net surfing, Facebook-ing, Instagram-ing, and just general recreating do you do? Jesus deserves some of that time. He deserves first place. Afterall, having Jesus' words and keeping them demonstrates that you love Him (John 14:21).

Secondly, you also need to strive to do what it says. "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me." If you want to grow spiritually you cannot just have knowledge in your head. You need to take that knowledge and do it.

The follower of Christ has an amazing promise regarding spiritual growth, but also a solemn responsibility. God causes growth. It is His work that progressively sanctifies you (Phil 1:6; 1 Cor 3:7). But God causes growth as you "cooperate" with Him. God does His part, and you do your part. God does the supernatural work of sanctifying, but you are commanded to strive and work hard at that growth. God started the work of transforming you into the image of Christ and He will complete it throughout your life.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13)

Striving to be like Christ is for all believers – young or old in the Lord, mature or less mature.

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I **press on** to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: **forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead**, ¹⁴I **press on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:12-14)

Are you striving? Are you forgetting the past failures or successes and reaching forward? Are you pressing on to maturity? Amazingly the most mature believer that ever lived says that he hasn't attained complete knowledge of Christ. He is not completely sanctified. Paul is not where wants to be, so he strives, presses, reaches. So should we!

How would you describe your pursuit of spiritual maturity?

If you are taking in the Word of God and doing it, then you will become closer and closer to Jesus. He will progressively sanctify you. So, what does this maturity bring?

¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their **powers (senses – NAS) of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.** (Heb 5:14)

A mature follower of Christ practices taking in the Word of God and doing the Word of God. This practice trains them to be able to distinguish between good and evil. They can tell what is true and what is not true. They know the Scriptures. They think in accord with the Scriptures. They walk according to the Scriptures. They have God's priorities. They are focused on God's glory and His mission of making disciples.

What are some areas where maturity will help with distinguishing good and evil in your parenting?

Set the example of a worthy walk

Parents should be striving for spiritual maturity, but it is also important that parents set the example of a worthy walk. Many times, the Scriptures exhort us to a "worthy" walk (Phil 1:17; Eph 4:1; Col 1:10; 1 Thess 2:12).

¹I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,** (Eph 4:1)

"Worthy" means to balance the scales or to make things equivalent. It means to match practice with profession. The believer's conduct is to match the changed life caused by the gospel. You walk is to match your calling to be like Christ. This isn't perfection, but a pattern of life where your practice matches profession. Walking in a manner worthy of your calling is something that can be seen by those around you.

Why is this important? Those you live with will see who you truly are. They will see you at your best and at your worst. Anyone who sees you a significant portion of your day needs to see your worthy walk. They need to see your life matching your profession.

Paul said, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor 11:1). Can you say that to your spouse? Children?

Walking worthily is important because it validates the gospel. We know that the gospel is true because we know the Bible is true. In the early church, the gospel and the Word of God were confirmed true with signs and wonders and miracles (Heb 2:3-4). Those signs, wonders, and miracles stopped with the completion of the Scriptures. We no longer needed the message validated since the Scriptures were once for all delivered.

Yet, every time a sinner repents, there is still a miraculous validation of the gospel. God works supernaturally every time He brings a dead, blind, captive, sin-slave to repentance. God regenerates; justifies; adopts; sanctifies; and baptizes, indwells, seals, and gives gifts by the Holy Spirit. The work of God that changes you shows that the gospel is true. There is no one more needing to see that truth than your children, unbelieving spouse, extended family, coworkers, and neighbors. Those people who see you most need to see a worthy walk.

The opposite of a worthy walk is a hypocritical walk. A fleshly walk. A walk that shows the deeds of the flesh as opposed to the fruits of the Spirit. A walk that is characterized by pride, anger, bitterness, worry, fear, relationship strife, sexual immorality, drunkenness, etc. A life characterized by these things by someone who claims to follow Christ is hypocritical.

In contrast, unbelievers around you are drawn to a worthy walk. A walk of humility, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control is different than the world. It is attractive. When you walk worthily, you proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9). You not only speak the gospel, but you show that the gospel is true. Those closest to you need to see that.

What are some unworthy things that you need to strive to put off?

Be deeply connected and committed to the local church

Parents should be striving for spiritual maturity and to set an example of a worthy walk, but it is also important for parents to be deeply connected and committed to the local church.

The local body is where you gather for corporate worship. It is where you become equipped to accomplish the mission of making disciples. It is where you use your spiritual gifts to serve one another for God's glory as good stewards of His grace. It is where you gather to grow into mature disciples of Christ. The result is that you are grounded.

¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to **equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,** ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of **the knowledge of the Son of God,** to **mature** manhood, to the measure of the stature of the **fullness of Christ,** ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph 4:11-14)

It is the church that is the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim 3:15), not the family. The local church (the family of God) needs to be central to your personal family life. God has designed the church in such a way so that care can be brought to each believer. Parents are loved, edified, encouraged, admonished, comforted, etc. by other believers primarily in the context of local body involvement (Rom 12:4-5; Heb 10:23-25).

Are you connected and committed to the local church?

Additionally, parents are nowhere commanded in Scripture to take a break from using their gifts to serve the body while parenting. You have great freedom in how you choose to serve in the local body. But having your family as your “primary ministry” and not serving the body is not something we see in Scripture.

¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: (1 Pet 4:10)

Are you actively serving the brethren?

Be purposeful in interacting with your children about the Word of God

Parents should be striving for spiritual maturity, to set an example of a worthy walk, and to be connected and committed to the local church, but it is also important to be purposeful in giving the Word of God to their children. You should constantly talk about the Scriptures.

Let's look at Deuteronomy 6. Deuteronomy contains the farewell speeches that Moses gave to Israel just prior to his death. We know that all Scripture is for us but not all Scripture is to us. This passage is to the nation of Israel, but we can glean much about what God desires for all those who are called to be His. This is not a command to us, but it is instructive.

We do not have time to dig deeply into this passage today, but let's make some observations about behaviors that should characterize believing families.

⁴“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:4-9)

First, believing parents should be centered on God (v5). God's children should, “love the Lord your God with *all* your heart and with *all* your soul and with *all* your might.” Every aspect of your being should love God.

What are some specific ways your life demonstrates loving God?

“All” is used three times in the verse. Nothing in your life should even come close to the affection you hold for God – not your job, hobbies, entertainment, social media, pleasures, or even your spouse or children. God must be first in your household.

What takes first place in your life?

Second, believing parents should be centered on God's Word (v6). God's words should be on your heart. The Hebrew word for “heart” means mind in our Western thinking. The Word of God should be on our mind constantly.

Who gets to see us taking in God's Word? Those we live with – our children and spouse and extended family. What an example for them! Your children will remember their entire life the importance that you give (or do not give) to the Word of God. So, Christian parents should have their affections set on God and be striving to intake God's Words into their mind.

What are some ways to keep God's Word on your mind?

Third, believing parents should strive to output God's Word into their children's lives (v7-9). The passage gives two ways to transfer the Word to your children. Both take effort.

“Teach them diligently” comes from a root word meaning to sharpen. Have you ever sharpened a knife on a sharpening stone? It takes concentration, repetition, and practice to bring the knife across the sharpening stone and hone it to razor sharpness. This speaks of constant, repetitive, purposed events.

It is your personal responsibility to teach your children God's Word. This is not telling your kids the big 15 Bible stories over and over again. This is purposing to teach your child the whole counsel of the Word of God. Teach your children about God's attributes. Teach them about Jesus. Teach them about sin and salvation. Teach them about the walk of faith. Teach them about the believer's purpose of glorifying God and mission of making disciples. Teach them about the Christian worldview and how that differs from Satan's world system. The bottom line is you are to be diligent to teach the Scriptures in your home.

The passage also says, “shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” This speaks of opportune events. Outside of purposed times, this is all the other times. You should talk about God's Word with your children when you are in your house and outside your house. You should talk about the Word morning through evening.

This as speaking continually about the Lord and His Word. Talking about the meaning and application of Scripture should be the parent's constant pastime. It is a lifestyle. Parenting is a full-time responsibility. No phase of life is exempt. Biblical parenting is not compartmentalized parenting. There is no such thing as exchanging “quantity” time for “quality” time. Both are important.

To make this happen, you are going to have to actually talk to your children. Put down the device, video game, reading material, hobby, turn off the TV, etc. Actually, interact with your children. And as you interact with your children, you are bringing life's joys and difficulties back to the Word of God.

As you go through life, as you move from one event to another, you could be asking yourself “God, what would you have me to do now?”. Have that interaction with your children. “God, what does your Word say about this situation?” “Son/Daughter, what do you think God's Word says about this situation?” “Let's read about that in God's Word.”

Again, the bottom line is clear. You need to make spending opportune time with your children a priority. And this aspect of Christian parenting should be easy if you are striving for spiritual maturity, striving to set an example of a worthy walk, and striving to be connected and committed to the local church. If you are walking well, it is easy to build the truth into your children's lives in purposed and opportune events.

**Are you taking purposed times and daily opportunities to make the
Word of God your family's focus?**

Summary

The purpose of the Christian parent is to glorify God. The mission of the Christian parent is to make disciples of their children. To do this, Christian Parents should be striving for personal spiritual maturity, striving to set an example of a worthy walk, striving to be connected and committed to the local church, and striving to be purposeful in giving the Word of God to their children.

Discussion Scenarios

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

Scenario #1 – Brainstorm with your tablemates ways in which you are or could be striving to bring the Word of God to your Children (both purposed and opportune).

Scenario #2 – Your children love soccer (or some other activity). They play soccer all year long. As a result of this commitment, you end up only attending church sporadically, they do not attend youth group, and you do not attend a growth group. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. As a follower of Christ, what **must** you do? And what are you free to do?

Scenario #3 – A church friend spends most of their time at work and on hobbies and leaves the parenting to their spouse. This has inevitably caused friction in the marriage. In thinking about bringing biblical care to your hurting friend, what is the first thing you need to know? What is the next thing you might share with him/her?

Additional Study

Look through each of the areas below. How might you teach the Word of God to your children purposely and opportunistically in each of these areas?

- Teach your children about the Bible, Teach them the importance of the Word. Teach them the richness of the Word. Teach them the power of the Word.
- Teach your children about their Creator. Teach them about *all* His attributes.
- Teach your children about sin; show them their own sin. Ensure that sin is viewed as a violation of God’s law and not a displeasure by you. Teach them about their total depravity. Teach them about the penalty for their sin. Teach them about their inability to earn or deserve forgiveness of sin. Teach them that they are helpless before God.
- Teach your children about Jesus. Teach them that Jesus is the eternal God-man – Lord of all. Teach them of the purpose of His coming. Teach them of His eternity, virgin birth, sinless life, sacrifice for sin, resurrection, ascension, and imminent return.
- Teach children about true saving faith. Teach them that saving faith is not mere intellectual assent to facts concerning the gospel. Teach them that saving faith is faith in the Lord of all. Teach them that saving faith encompasses trust/belief, repentance, following Jesus, self-denial, forsaking all, and confessing Jesus as Lord.
- Teach your children the state of the fallen world and those that live in it.
- Teach your children the compassion of Christ for dead, blind, captive, sin-slaves.
- Teach your children the day-in, day-out walk of faith.