

**Christian Parenting
Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

This morning we are celebrating Mother's Day, and in light of this celebration it seems very fitting that we would once again consider the topic of parenting.

So let me ask you this question. Do you believe that after a person accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior that their parenting will be impacted? Or in other words, after they accept Christ, will they be parenting differently than they were prior to accepting Christ? And the answer would have to be yes; of course they would parent differently after accepting Christ than they were prior to accepting Christ.

Let me read for you **2 Corinthians 5:14-17**. And what do these verses say? They say this. **"For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; (15) and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (16) Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. (17) Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."** In these verses Paul described for his readers and for us how his faith in Christ had impacted him, an impact so dramatic and radical that he described himself and others like him as having become new creatures in Christ.

So let me now once again ask you the same question that I asked you earlier. Do you believe that when a person truly accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior that they will in fact parent differently than if they had never done so? And the answer would have to be, as I shared earlier, of course they would parent differently. In fact, how could they not parent differently if they in fact have become new creatures in Christ?

Saved parents will parent differently than unsaved parents. This morning I will be seeking to highlight for you some of those basic differences.

And what is my hope for this morning's message? My hope is that as we consider these basic differences that each of us will be challenged to consider our own parenting practices leading us to be either reassured that

our present parenting practices are consistent with our Christian faith or convicting us that our present parenting practices are inconsistent with our Christian faith. Thus producing in us what would be considered the appropriate response, either one of thanksgiving or one of repentance.

So, what is the question that we will be seeking to answer this morning? The question that we will be seeking to answer this morning is this: What are the basic parental differences between saved and unsaved parents? This morning we will be covering three of those basic differences. So, what is the first one?

Our hope is that saved parents will have a different overarching goal for their children than unsaved parents do for their children (Romans 5:12,15). So let me ask you this question. Should the primary over-arching goal of Christian parents be to train up their children to become well-adjusted adults who are able to maintain healthy relationships and sustain comfortable lifestyles? Should this be the primary over-arching goal?

Certainly this is a worthy goal and a goal that many parents have adopted for their children, but this goal should not be the primary over-arching goal of Christian parents. So, if it is not the goal, then what should it be?

Our hope is that the overarching goal of saved parents will be the salvation of their children (Romans 5:12,17). The importance of this being the singular over-arching goal of Christian parents cannot be over emphasized.

Let me read for you **Romans 5:12**. And what does it say? It says this. **“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”**

Sin entered this world through Adam, and what was the consequence of that sin? Death spread to all men, not to just a few men, but to all men. Isn't that what the verse says? **“Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”** How did they sin? They sinned in Adam our seminal head.

When our children are born to us they are physically alive but they are spiritually dead, or in other words their spirit (the eternal part of our child) has no capacity to respond to God. They are separated from Him because

they, from the viewpoint of God, had already sinned. How? They had already sinned in Adam.

This is a horrible situation. And why is this so horrible? It is horrible because not only will those who are separated from God be spiritually impoverished in this life, thus finding themselves futilely seeking to fill the vacuum in their hearts through worldly stuff, but of even greater consequence is that those who are separated from God and who are not rescued from this horrible situation during the course of their lives will eventually, in the next life, be eternally damned.

I know that we think that our children are cute! I know that we think that our children are brilliant! I know that we think that our children are capable of great things in terms of the things of this world, but if they do not find salvation what good are these things? And what is the answer? The answer is apart from salvation nothing else in this world really matters!

So in light of this, what should be the one primary over-arching goal of Christian parenting? The one primary overarching goal of Christian parenting should be the salvation of our children, or in other words helping them by the grace of God to find life as it is defined in the Scriptures through Christ.

Isn't this true? Shouldn't this be our one primary overarching goal? How could it not be? Let me ask you a question. How would you feel as a Christian if your children, as they became adults, were successful in terms of the things of this world but were unsaved? I believe you would be devastated. Would an unsaved parent be devastated? No! They wouldn't be devastated at all.

But we would be devastated? Why? We would be devastated because we understand what non-Christian parents do not understand. We understand that every person born into this world is born into this world spiritually dead and in need of salvation. And apart from their salvation anything else they might experience in this world or accomplish in this world is ultimately worthless.

What did Jesus say to His disciples in **Matthew 16:26**? This is what He said. **“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”** And of course the answer is there is no profit for them.

Therefore in light of this what should be our one primary over-arching goal as Christian parents? Our one primary overarching goal as Christian parents should be the salvation of our children, and this goal should be the driving force behind everything that we do.

So is this true for us? Is this our one primary overarching goal? Hopefully it is. And if it is, then we should give God thanks that we by His grace understand the importance of this. But if it is not, then let us by the grace of God confess our parental failure and change our present course.

But we are still not done. There are still other basic parental differences between saved and unsaved parents that we have not yet considered. So, what is the next difference?

Our hope is that saved parents will have a different strategic approach to parenting than unsaved parents have (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). And what would be that strategic difference in approach?

Let me now read for you **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**. And what do these verses say? They say this. **“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! (5) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up. (8) You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. (9) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”** In these verses God is instructing Israel and is explaining to them how their faith in Him and their love for Him needed to be expressed by allowing His word to impact every area of their lives. If they were to do this then they could be described as having the Word of God on their heart. And this describes the strategic difference in approach between saved parents and unsaved parents.

The strategic approach to parenting that saved parents should have, as an expression of their faith and love for God, is to bring their own lives into submission to God’s Word, or as Moses described it, they should have God’s Word on their hearts.

For them there is no better approach to parenting; knowing that in doing so they will not only please God, but will be the recipients of His grace according to **James 4:6**.

And what will be the by-product of having God's Word on their heart? Christian parents who have the Word of God on their hearts will seize every opportunity to communicate God's Word to their children (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

Isn't this what we see in **verses 6-9**. Let me now read these verse for you and what do they say? They say this, **"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up. (8) You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. (9) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."** Clearly God expects, based on these words, that those who have His Word on their hearts will seize every opportunity they have to communicate His Word to their children.

And what should be the focal point of our sharing prior to children's salvation? The focal point of what we share with our children prior to their salvation should be designed to help them understand the gospel of Christ and their need to respond to it (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

So what is the gospel? Let me read for you **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** and what does it say? It says this. **"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, (2) by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."**

So, what is the gospel or the good news? This is the gospel or good news: When Christ, the only begotten Son of God, died on the cross of Calvary and paid the debt that was owed to God because of sin, He opened a door to heaven. This door remains open to all those who desire to be set free from their sin! And how do they go through that door? All they have to do is to exercise faith in the person and work of Christ thus transferring their trust

from themselves and their good works to Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. Those who do this will immediately pass through the door that Christ has opened and be saved. This is the gospel.

What is the goal of Christian parenting? The primary overarching goal of Christian parenting is the salvation of our children. And what invariably will be the strategic approach that Christian parents will adopt in seeking to achieve this goal? The strategic approach that Christian parents will invariably adopt as an expression of their faith and love for God is to bring every area of their lives into complete and total submission to the Word of God that Moses described as having the Word of God on our hearts.

But we are still not done. There is still another area of marked difference between saved parenting and unsaved parenting and that is one of attitude.

Saved parents should have a different attitude when it comes to parenting than unsaved parents. So, what exactly would that difference in attitude be?

Our hope is that saved parents will understand the importance of maintaining a humble spirit before the Lord (James 4:6-10).

Let me now read for you **James 4:6-10**. And what do these verses say? They say this. **“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (7) Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (8) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”**

The bottom line is this. Even though we may know what we are trying to do and how we need to go about doing it, we can accomplish nothing in our own strength. And why is this? We are weak and frail and without strength. What did Jesus say to His disciples? This is what He said, **“Without Me you can do nothing,”** and this of course includes parenting.

Do we want our children to be saved? If we want our children to be saved then let us humble ourselves before God in prayer and unceasingly ask Him to pour out His mercy upon our children and us.

Lynn and I recognized that our goal as Christian parents was the salvation of our children. Lynn and I also recognized that our responsibility as Christian parents was to live the Word. But we also recognized that apart from Christ we could neither reach our goal nor fulfill our responsibility. Therefore it was always paramount and continues to be paramount in our lives that we remain bowed before Christ and to continue to ask Him to pour out His mercy upon us and our children.

Saved parents, as new creatures in Christ, hopefully will, unlike unsaved parents, be seeking the salvation of their children; be seeking by God's grace to submit themselves completely in every area of their lives to the Word of God that Moses described as having the Word of God on their hearts. And finally, be seeking to remain humble before God's throne of grace.

May God give us the grace as Christian parents to have the right approach with the right goal and with the right attitude.