

Broomfield



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 2 Issue 45

November 30, 2003

The Goal of Parenting

The Christian Family, Part 2

The Difficult Call of Parenting

The Bible tells us about the taxing responsibilities of parenting.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

A parent must teach the children diligently by talking to them. This is to be done day and night in every situation. Truly, the call of the parent is one of the more difficult ministries that God can give a person. Parenting involves the whole individual- their heart, energy, time, mind, emotions, and will. And yet parenting comes with NO warranties or guarantees.

Or does it?

Proverbs 22:6, “Train up¹ a child in the way² he should go³: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Most read this and claim it as a guarantee- believing that as they have raised their child in God's way God will save them. And yet, this text says nothing of the sort. Far from a promise, it is a WARNING. This verse could be literally rendered: “Dedicate a child to the mouth of his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it.” And thus we receive from this proverb a very important warning. To raise a child in “the mouth of their way” — which is another way of saying “in THEIR way” — is to allow a child to always get their own way. It is to allow a child to pick and to choose what they will and will not do. It is like allowing them to plant a garden and never weed it. It is to allow them to build a character that will be impossible for the child himself to change when he grows older.

Indeed we must heed the warning of Proverbs 22. As a parent, we must raise our children not in their

¹ חָנַךְ chanak

² דֶּרֶךְ derek

³ פָּה peh

own way or even in our own way but in God's way!

Ephesians 6:1-4 contains Paul's teaching regarding God's plan for parenting. And though the first three verses are addressed to children they serve as instruction on Biblical parenting. All parents are charged in verse 4 with raising their children to maturity — a maturity which would include the exhortations of verses 1-3.

The first truth that God has us learn when it comes to the parent/child relationship is the goal of parenting. This goal of parenting is two fold.

The Goal: Obedience

Ephesians 6:1, “Children⁴, obey⁵ your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”

The word *obey* carries the idea of listening with attentiveness and responding positively to what is heard. This word literally means to “hear under” and thus “to obey.” Indeed, the first goal of Biblical parenting is obedience!

Now this goal probably could have been predicted by most. When we look at God's word, we see that obedience has always been God's focus when it comes to His people and their maturation.

Deuteronomy 5:32-33, “Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.”

1 Samuel 15:22, “And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice**, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

Joshua 1:8, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

Titus 2:14, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Indeed, the goal or aim of Christian maturity is obedience. And it is this same charge that is given to all children. Children Must Obey Their Parents. And thus we note the charge given to parents throughout Scripture.

In Deuteronomy 4:9 Moses commands all parents to “make [God's Law] known to your sons and your grandsons.” In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 Moses charged the parents, “And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons.”

These commands make it imperative that children must know God's word so that they might obey!

⁴ τέκνον teknon This term is not age specific but reference anyone under parental authority

⁵ υπακούω hupakouo

Proverbs 6:20, “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”

And thus, the picture of the godly parent is as these Scriptures teach:

1 Timothy 3:4, “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.”

Titus 1:6, “If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.”

And so AS PARENTS, we are not satisfied with sweet children or children with a good disposition, or children who are first in their class, or children who are well-adjusted, athletic, and good looking. Rather we want, desire, pray and labor toward children who will obey God and His chosen leaders, their parents. This is the FIRST GOAL of Biblical parenting.

Is this moralism?

Now immediately this raises the charge of “moralism.” Isn’t parenting that seeks for obedience a parenting that is void of grace? Should not our parenting reflect grace and not law? What about godliness? Maturation in Christ? Etc.?

To answer this, recall the context of this passage.

Paul began his treatment of the Biblical family in Ephesians 5:15. And thus, that which serves as the prerequisite to the Husband/Wife relationship is also the prerequisite for the Parent/Child relationship. Re

Ephesians 5:14-15, “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.”

It is salvation that serves as the basis for all of Paul’s commands in this section. This is why Paul says to the children, “obey your parents IN THE LORD.” As REDEEMED parents rearing COVENANT children — children who are members of God’s household — that we labor toward the goal of obedience!

From this perspective, the true nature of parenting is discipleship! And so the goal of Biblical parenting — obedience — is a goal that flows FROM the Cross not TO it!

This is right.

Now in this context, notice Paul’s words:

Ephesians 6:1, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: **for this is right**⁶.”

The word *right* refers to that which is correct, just, or “as it should be.” In other words, it is not normal for a covenant child to stagnate or rebel in their walks such that they cultivate a heart of rebellion against their parents.

And so, when children obey their parents — and when parents see to it that their children obey them —

⁶ δικαιοσ dikaios

the family functions according to God's plan of redemption, and thus functions as it should! From this perspective, we note that the motive for the command in Ephesians 6:1 is not because if a child does not obey, they're going to get it. The motive is not one of intimidation. The motive is not one of bribery. The motive is because this accords with how God ordered and designed the family.

And so the message you must give to your children and the motive governing your discipline is not that I'm bigger, louder, and willing and ready to punish but "I care about your walk with Christ so much that I will hold you accountable to your God!" That is the idea behind, "this is right." **OBEDIENCE IS A CRUCIAL PART OF SERVING GOD!**

An Implication: Discipline

In fact we see this element in God's raising of His Son.

Hebrews 5:8, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

God ordained suffering and hardship in the life of Christ that as He grew up, He might learn obedience! Such is our goal in parenting!

This raises a very important implication when it comes to disciplining our children. God's word says these things:

Proverbs 13:24, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

2 Samuel 7:14, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men."

We are called in Scripture to discipline or spank our children.

Why do we spank? The primary reason we must discipline our children is on account of rebellion.⁷ We should not spank our children for childish things. For example we shouldn't spank our children because they knocked over a lamp, jumped on the couch, ran in the hallway, or were late in coming home. Rather we must spank them because they have rebelled against God-given authority.

This is a huge theme in Scripture that will be repeated throughout this study. Most parents miss this, and so raise children who think they get spanked because they threw a ball, tackled a sibling, and wore a certain dress. This is to raise children with a pagan view of God.

INDEED! The reason we spank — and I would suggest that this is something your child should be able to articulate every time they get disciplined — is because they have rebelled against our authority and thus ultimately God's!

⁷ Compare Micah 1:3-5

The Goal: Reverence

The first goal of parenting is obedience, and the second is reverence.

Ephesians 6:2, “Honour⁸ thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise.)”

This constitutes the second goal of Biblical parenting reverence. It is not enough that our children obey. They must obey with a good attitude!

Now the word *honor* means to value highly, to hold in the highest regard and respect. It is the word used to refer to one's reverence and honor of God and Christ.⁹

From this we conclude that the same type of reverence and respect that a person is to give to God, children are to give to their parents! Yet as we asked last time, “How can this be?”

To understand Paul's command here we must again look at the context. In Ephesians 5:23, Paul introduced us to the teaching that the role of the man in marriage is the role of head — which, you will recall in the Bible is the role of covenantal overseer. It is an “office” that God has ordained to work through. It is the position of shepherd/servant in the covenantal community.

In other words, the man in a marriage serves as God's representative to the family. He is the one through which God leads and guides the community.

Now when we turn our focus to the role of the parent, the Bible recognizes that BOTH the father and the mother hold this “office.” Parents represent God to their children! And so, when a child disobeys their parents, they are disobeying God! And conversely, when a child honors their parents, they honor God.

Leviticus 19:1-3, “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy. Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.”

The honoring of a parent is closely tied to the honoring of God on account of the divinely delegated authority that parents hold in a family.

Genesis 2:24, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

It is from the authority of BOTH the father AND the mother that the man leaves and establishes another covenantal unit! That is why as fathers, we should never laugh when our children show disrespect toward us OR OUR SPOUSES. To disrespect any parent is to dishonor God! This is why Solomon exhorted his son this way:

Proverbs 6:20, “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”

Now all of this presupposes this truth: Parental authority is an “office” ordained by God. God uses parental authority to lead His covenantal children because this represents and reflects God’s authority

⁸ τιμαω timao

⁹ Compare 1 Timothy 1:17, 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 4:9, 11; 5:12-13

over them!

Consequently, when a child “honors” his father and mother, he honors God. And when a child rebels against his parents, he rebels against the Lord. Let us remember that rebellion understandably held dire consequences in the Bible.¹⁰ And so as parents, we labor toward the goal of reverence on the part of our children.

Now, what specifically does this mean?

Let’s start with what it doesn’t mean. It doesn’t mean that children are to treat their parents like gods. It doesn’t mean that children should jump when their parents say jump. It doesn’t mean that children are to be in fear and dread of their parents. The picture of the family in Scripture is not the military but the sheep-fold!

Rather reverence means that whether the parent deserves it or not, the child respects the parent as ordained by God! The child takes the authority of the parent as the authority of God! And thus the child willingly and lovingly submits! And the child does so with a good attitude!

Children are to “honor” their parents. They are to respect their authority, and are to maintain this respect throughout their lives!

A Good Attitude

Once again we see a very practical implication flowing from this: when it comes to disciplining or spanking, we derive from this verse the principle that we must discipline our children when they do not obey us with a good attitude!

This is so crucial to our children's healthy walk in Christ later in life.

Where does grumbling rank when it comes to God? Is grumbling a minor thing? Or is it a serious matter?

Grumbling is one of the more serious sins that can be committed before God!

Recall Korah’s rebellion in Numbers 16. The day came when Korah had followed Moses far enough. He led a chorus of grumbling before the Lord regarding Moses. In fact, the grumbling was so bad, that the people of God were ready to depart from Moses and follow Korah.¹¹

How did God respond?

God had the earth open up and swallow the grumbling choir.¹² Now amazingly, the next day the people of God as a whole began grumbling against Moses on account of Korah.¹³ And God sent a plague that consumed nearly 15,000 people.¹⁴

¹⁰ Compare Exodus 21:15 -17; Deuteronomy 21:18-21

¹¹ Compare Numbers 16:19

¹² Compare Numbers 16:32

¹³ Compare Numbers 16:41

¹⁴ Compare Numbers 16:49

Rebellion is a serious sin before the Lord! God equates it to witchcraft and Satan worship.¹⁵

1 Samuel 15:23, “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”

Rebellion is listed as one of the chief sins of the non-believer.¹⁶ Dishonoring of one’s parents is a sign of Gentile depravity.¹⁷ It is also a sign of the evil of the days.¹⁸ God also tells us that disobeying or dishonoring ones parents is a sin that will eventually reap death!¹⁹ To disobey or dishonor a parent is to disobey God.²⁰

To raise a child with a grumbling complaining spirit is to raise little Dothan’s and Korah’s who later in life will grumble and complain against God! Let us be quick to punish any form of grumbling, dishonor, or bad attitude in our children when it comes to our authority — their soul depends upon it!

Proverbs 23:14, “Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and **shalt deliver his soul from hell.**”

Needed Instruction

Now brothers and sisters, this teaching is so needed in our day! Parenting has fallen upon rough times. Look at the facts. Childhood violence is out of control. Single-parent homes are on the rise. Careers have taken precedent over our children. Day care is considered an acceptable form of parenting. It is the height of irresponsibility to parent a child and then abdicate your God-given authority in raising that child to obey and reverence God! All these things are epidemic in our society.

There is no winner when a parent allows a child to rebel against their authority, or any authority for that matter. When a child's rebellion goes unchecked God is dishonored. Unchecked rebellion is a sign that the parents have been proved unfaithful stewards of their children. And the children reap a character of defiance and rebellion!

Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Ah, but from our ignoble attempts at parenting our children THEIR or OUR way, we come afresh to God's word and discover God's plan for parenting. If we are to prove faithful to the stewardship God gives us in our children, BOTH parents must train their children unto the obedience and respect of themselves and of their God. This is God's plan for parenting.

How is this accomplished?

This is accomplished, as we saw last time, in the context of the covenantal community where a parent shepherds his children. Here a parent develops a relationship where he influences his children to love and

¹⁵ Compare 1 Samuel 15

¹⁶ Compare Romans 1:21

¹⁷ Compare Romans 1:30

¹⁸ Compare 2 Timothy 3:2

¹⁹ Compare Exodus 21:15-17; Deuteronomy 21:18-21

²⁰ Compare Leviticus 19:1-3

devotion as reflected at the cross of Christ.

And herein we are left with our own inconsistency — our own failure in this context.

What must a parent do to aid their children in their consistency and faithfulness?

Our text answers this question as it presupposes Ephesians 5:15-21. If you desire to rear your children according to God's plan by shepherding your children unto God begin by living by God's grace.²¹ Cultivating your walk with Christ such that the Spirit of God is filling you.²² Grow in your own submission to the Lord and one another.²³ This, as we saw at the beginning, is the key to effective parenting.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Before we will prove faithful to our children, we first must be faithful to God. Let us be a people that sit long by the well of grace. Let us know the forgiveness of Christ. Let us cheerfully learn obedience from the discipling hand of God! While this will not guarantee success as a parent, you cannot be a successful parent without it!

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on November 30, 2003. Greg is the preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.

²¹ Compare Ephesians 5:14 - 15

²² Compare Ephesians 5:18

²³ Compare Ephesians 5:21