

Class #10: Priorities for Fathers & Grandfathers

Sunday, March 17, 2019 | Geoffrey R. Kirkland

"A holy family is a place of comfort, a church of God ... Oh that God would stir up the hearts of people thus to make their families as little churches, that it might not be in the power of rulers or pastors that are bad to extinguish religion, or banish godliness from any land" (Richard Baxter).

"Now I know not any thing that will contribute more to the furtherance of this good work than the bringing of family religion more into practice and reputation. HERE the reformation must begin" (Matthew Henry).

"The only rule of ordering the family, is the written Word of God!" (William Perkins)

"The kingdom of Satan is built upon the twin-pillars of *ignorance* and *error*, so the disuse of family instruction is regarded as one of the greatest sins to open the flood-gates of ungodliness into society" (Henry Wilkinson).

Introduction

• Common struggles for fathers & grandfathers

1. Misprioritization - lack of proper priorities; earthly-mindedness; selfishness
2. Superficiality — not probing into the hearts of our kids/grandkids
3. Passivity — not initiating worship, friendship, relationship, communication
4. Impenitence - the kids don't see and hear Dad repent, confess and mourn over sin
5. Recreationism - church/fellowship/church-ministry is more of a Sunday only thing.
The common excuses: "*life is busy*" and "*work is busy*" and "*sports are consuming*"
6. Prayerlessness - we talk about prayer but give such little time to it (in the home!)
7. Passion - for God, for our wives, for our kids, for the church, for the lost
8. Pride - sinful and selfish responses; caring more for self than for others; arrogance

- This topic demands our urgent attention because parental neglect is commonplace and intentional parenting in holiness is rapidly diminishing.
- Puritan Richard Mather soberly gave this exhortation to careless parents when he imagined when, on judgment day, the damned will accuse their parents with these words...
 - "All this, parents, that we suffer in hell is through you; you should have taught us the things of God, and did not; you should have restrained us from sin and corrected us, and you did not; you were the means of our original corruption and guilt, and yet you never showed any competent care that we might be delivered from it. Woe unto us that we had such carnal and careless parents, and woe unto you that had no more compassion and pity to prevent the everlasting misery of your own children."
- So the question must be asked: **how do we *HINDER* our children from coming to Christ?**
 1. When we ourselves DO NOT go to Jesus. If we do not go to Jesus, how can we expect our children to do so?
 2. When we fail to foster Christ-centered conversation in the home. It's not just enough to talk about church affairs or to critique sermons. We must talk about Christ, His majestic glory, His love for sinners, His power to save, and His willingness to receive all who come to him.
 3. When we fail to live in integrity. This happens when our children hear what we say, but they do not see love for God and our neighbors shining through our actions.
 4. When we fail to love Christ and His local church.
 5. When we fail to trust God and hold fast to his promises and give in to enslavement to worry, fear, anxiety and anger.
 6. When we show little interest in spiritual things, so that our Bibles lie untouched from Sunday to Sunday — privately and in our family.
- Positively, then how **DO** we bring our children to Christ?
 1. Be fully convinced that our children NEED Jesus and his saving from everlasting hell. (John 3:36)
 2. Realize that our children belong to the Lord (Acts 17:28)
 3. Surrender our children to the Lord (praying for them for God's protection; (Ps 66:8-9; 121:7)
 4. Speak to and live with our children in a Christ centered way (Matt 12:34)
 5. Strive to make a godly impression on our children with OUR lives (Ps 34:11)
 6. Show our children our reverence and joy toward God (Neh 8:10; Ps 33:1, 18; 34:11)
 7. Teach our children the whole counsel of God, both law and gospel
 8. Offer our children Christ-centered views of current events
 9. Lovingly warn our children about being outside of Jesus Christ and hell's reality
 10. Become spiritual mentors / disciplers for our grandchildren (Ps 103:17; Ps 128:6)

- One man gave this testimony as he said: “my family is all grown up and the kids are all gone. ***But!*** If i had to do it all over again, this is what I’d do...”
 - ✓ I would love my wife more in front of my children.
 - ✓ I would laugh with my children more — at our mistakes and our joys.
 - ✓ I would listen more, even to the littlest child.
 - ✓ I would be more honest about my own weaknesses and never pretend perfection.
 - ✓ I would pray differently for my family — instead of focusing so much on them, I’d focus more on me.
 - ✓ I would do more things together with my children.
 - ✓ I would encourage them more and bestow more encouragement.
 - ✓ I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness.
 - ✓ And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to GOD.

- We want to teach and model for our kids to LIVE FOR GOD.

Philippians 1:21 – “for to me, to live is Christ; to die is gain!”

 1. Use the Word of God and depend fully on the Spirit.
 2. Use every opportunity.
 3. Do not abandon your post [don’t give up].
 4. It is never too late to start. *Ever.*

Here are 3 unequivocal priorities for all fathers and grandfathers to be faithful to God and to be biblical examples to our children.

1. Worship Your God!

“[Your children] are not merely to be taught out of some elementary book that they must love God, but *you must* show them God is loved. If they observe that no worship is paid to that God of whom they hear, the very best instruction will prove useless; but by means of Family Worship, these young plants will grow “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither.” (J.H. Merle D’Aubigne, 1827)

Deut 6.4-9; Job 1.1-5. [Consider the example of Jacob worshiping on his death bed; Heb 11:21]

Consider Noah’s example (Hebrews 11:7 & Genesis 6:8-10)

1. He heard God (Heb 11.7)
2. He obeyed God (Heb 11.7)
3. He led his family (Heb 11.7)
4. He condemned sin (Heb 11.7)

5. He lived by faith (Heb 11.7)

Godly saints in church history have advocated the setting a time in your daily schedule when you will meet with the Lord personally, privately for your own spiritual benefit. You'll read the Scriptures, meditate, pray, and perhaps read other solid material. Be disciplined! Do it every day! Find a quiet, private location. And prioritize this discipline. *[Note the order of Deut 11.18-19]*

"Experience teaches us that children learn more by countenance, gesture, and behavior more than by rule, doctrine, precept or instruction" (Richard Greenham).

"It is a desirable thing, when a man has a house of his own, to have God come to him and dwell with him in it!" (Matthew Henry)

The secret of homemade rule is self rule, first being ourselves what we want our children to be (Andrew Murray).

2. Love Your Wife!

"The most important example that parents possess is their marriage. Our marriages preach. They preach a message that either attracts or repels our children. (William Farley).

"Human marriage exists to preach the gospel! ... When a husband is unfaithful to his wife, verbally belittles her, loves his children more than her, or takes her for granted, his marriage says: *"Christ's love is not that great. He loves us only when we perform. You can't really trust this Savior. You can't meet his expectations. He doesn't keep his promises. Why serve a fickle despot? His deeds say: "Many things can separate us from the love of Christ."* Paul's point: Christian marriage preaches this union. It makes it either attractive or ugly. When a husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church, washing her with the Word, forgiving her, serving her, and tenderly leading her, his marriage says: *"Christ loves his church. You can trust the Groom! He is infinitely loving. Serve him. You won't be disappointed!"* (William Farley)

Eph 5.31-32; Song of Solomon

Some practical ways we can learn from Song of Songs & love our wives before our children's eyes...

1. verbal affirmation (4:1-7; 7:1, 6)
2. emotional attraction (4:9)
3. exclusive affection (5:1; 7:10)
4. supreme appreciation (6:1, 9)

5. permanent devotion (8:6-7)

3. Lead Your Home!

The Puritans made it a law that parents must teach their children to read so that they could read the Bible and other religious material for their spiritual welfare.

“Education should begin as early as possible, and though it should be thorough, godliness is more important than learning, and schoolmasters must be chosen with this in mind. The aptness or gifts of children should be noted, that they might be trained for a suitable calling. The claims of the Christian ministry should be remembered, and where ability exists, a son should be exhorted to enter it” (Gaius Davies).

1. By teaching

“Soul love is the soul of all love!” (JC Ryle)

1. Teach your children who God is and what God is like
2. Teach them the seriousness of sin
3. Teach them about hell
4. Teach them about the Law of God [God’s just standard & holy Law & demands]
5. Teach them the necessity of the New Birth
6. Teach them about the Lord Jesus Christ
7. Teach them about the atoning blood of Christ
8. Teach them about the necessity of faith in Christ
9. Teach them about sanctification and holiness
10. Teach them about the joys of heaven

Teaching kids was not only to give knowledge: but a "warm appreciation of the truths of God in mind and soul that the child would lead a holy life" (Joel Beeke).

"Let it be the principal part of your care and labour in all their education to make holiness appear to them the most necessary, honorable, gainful, pleasant, delightful, amiable state of life; and to keep them from apprehending it either as needless, dishonorable, hurtful, or uncomfortable" (Richard Baxter).

"Instruction of our children in learning and religion must be so ordered so that they may take it with DELIGHT"(William Perkins).

2. By praying

Ps 34:11 (cf. Gen 26:25; Psalm 105:1).
Jeremiah 10:25

"We may observe what fearful threatenings are pronounced against those who disregard this duty [of family prayer]. We wonder how many of our readers have seriously pondered those awe-inspiring words "Pour out Thy fury upon the heathen that know Thee not, and upon the *families that call not on Thy name*" (Jer. 10:25)! How unspeakably solemn to find that prayerless families are here coupled with the heathen that know not the Lord. Yet need that surprise us?...

It is not enough that we pray as private individuals in our closets; we are required to honor God in our families as well. At least twice each day—in the morning and in the evening—the whole household should be gathered together to bow before the Lord—parents and children, master and servant – to confess their sins, to give thanks for God's mercies, to seek His help and blessing. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this duty: all other domestic arrangements are to bend to it. ... Under no circumstances should family worship be omitted. If we would enjoy the blessing of God upon our family then let its members gather together daily for praise and prayer. "Them that honour Me I will honour" is His promise" (AW Pink).

3. By worshipping

Josh 24:11 - we *will* serve the Lord

Eph.6:4 - bring them up (1) discipline and (2) instruction of the Lord!

This is the parental duty (parents; but the duty falls especially on Fathers).

Judges 2:6-15 -- Warning!

The season of transition

The subtleness of distraction

The shamefulfulness of transgression

Family Worship - God deserves to be worshiped in our homes, in our families, every day.

Family Worship should include 4 components:

1. prayer (1 Thess 5:17; Jer 10.25)
2. reading Scripture (Josh 1:8-9; 1 Tim 4:13; Heb 4:12-13)
3. instruction from Scripture (Deut 6.6-7 and 11.18-19)
4. singing (Ps 118.15a; Col 3.16)

William Whately wrote: "A father who does not lead his household in the ways of God through regular family worship "keeps a household of demons, a seminary for the devil, a nursery for hell, and a kingdom of death."

Parents have the task of erecting and establishing Christ's glorious kingdom in their house (Isaac Ambrose)

Proverbs has much to say about "foolish" and "disobedient" children:

A disobedient son...

1. grieves his mother (Prov 10.1)
2. despises his mother (Prov 15.5)
3. sorrows his father (Prov 17.21)
4. ruins his father (Prov 19.13a)
5. shames his parents (Prov 19.26)
6. robs his parents (Prov 28.24)

Conclusion

A PURITAN PRAYER OF A FATHER FOR HIS CHILDREN....

Oh God, I cannot endure to see the destruction of my children.

Let those that are united to me in tender ties be precious in Your sight, and devoted to Your Glory.

Sanctify and prosper my domestic devotion,

my domestic instruction, my domestic discipline,

my domestic example so that my house may be a nursery for heaven,

my church the garden of the Lord,

enriched with the trees of righteousness of your planting for your glory.

Let not those in my family who are amiable, moral and attractive fall short of heaven at last,

but grant that the promising appearance of tender consciences, of soft hearts,

of the alarms and delights of your Word may not be blotted out,

But may bring forth judgment unto victory in all those whom I love.