

Radiant Church, July 10, 2016
Mike Rydman

Parenting is a Picture of the Gospel
Ephesians 6:1-4

Deuteronomy 11:18-21 *You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in our heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that you days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.*

How do we as Christian parents today help out little ones to “lay up these words...in their heart and soul?”

Is it the church’s responsibility, only?

Are we guilty of abdicating this responsibility?

Ephesians 6:1-4 *Children, obey you parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

First of all, Paul writes directly to “fathers.” Both parents are to be directly involved in parenting

It’s not “Dad goes to work, and Mom raises the kids”

If anything, Dad’s can often abdicate their parental role

Some Polynesian/Native cultures add even more confusion to this

(The instruction of the boys rests with the uncle/s)

The only authority the Bible recognizes is a servant authority, when you are committed to helping another person (in this case, your child) raise up into the freedom of standing on his or her own.

This is also the authority Jesus gives to the leaders in His Church:

servant authority - those who raise up others to maturity in Christ

The authority exists for the benefit of the one under that authority

How do parents “provoke their children to anger?”

When our instruction is limited to reactions to their poor behavior

Reactive, rather than proactive

When we discipline out kids out of our own anger

The whole idea of the parent is to raise up the child, not to keep the child

dependent, but to get the child up and out on their own, to get the child to the place where he or she can make decisions for himself or herself. Therefore, the whole purpose of authority in the family is so the parents can be teachers.

Second, we see here two effective parenting tools:

Training (bringing them up”) in the discipline and instruction of the Lord

The “discipline” of the Lord is those guidelines, even restriction we place on our children for their own protection and good

Not necessarily for the parents’ own protection and good

Therefore, we “discipline” to move them forward, not backward

Let’s be totally honest here - as parents, we can all be guilty of disciplining our kids, simply because we are frustrated with their lack of respect toward us, or because what they’re doing infuriates us, makes our lives inconvenient or even painful.

The word “instruction” in this case means “to counsel.” If you want to know how to “provoke your children to anger,” to exasperate your children, you do this:

You can over-discipline, where all the emphasis is on training with no instruction: all discipline, all rules.

Or you can under-discipline, and that’s where you’re always talking to the kid, always trying to negotiate, but you never come down on them.

Let’s be honest about something else - as parents, we will parent as a response to the example set by our own parents, or out of a reaction against our own parents

Here’s the point: right or wrong, parents (your parents, or you as a parent) feel a need to see themselves in their children. Children reflect their parents, and we want our own children to reflect us well to the outside world

Isaiah 49:15-18 *Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your wall are continually before me. Your builders make haste; your destroyers and those who laid you waste go out from you. Lift up your eyes around and see; they all gather, they come to you. As I live, declares the LORD, you shall put them all on as an ornament; you shall bind them on as a bride does.*

God is saying, “I wear my redeemed children like ornaments.”

And in some ways, we wear our children like ornaments, too.

How do we know this? Ever been embarrassed by your kids in public?

Ever been proud for something your kid did well?

God does not give any of us children to validate us. We are validated in and by Him. Helicopter parents by “helicoptering” tell the world that they want and expect their children to validate them. That is not the gospel.

Nor is ignoring out kids, so we can validate ourselves independent of our kids. Neither extreme is Biblical parenting

That’s the fact, but the gospel question is this: will we raise up our kids to reflect our Savior, Jesus?

Do we accept the reality that our kids will form impressions and opinions of who God is and how God interacts with His created people...by what they see in us?

In other words, do we reflect the Savior? Do our kids see that?

Do we talk about Jesus in our homes, to and with our kids? Or do we just leave that responsibility in the hands of the church?

The relationship between parents and their children is a picture of our relationship between God the Father and us.

Put it this way: Every human being was built for family love. Do you know what family love is? Unconditional love, a love you can be absolutely sure of no matter what you’ve done, or what you’ve become.

And this is true for parents, too - because none of us, Moms or Dads are perfect.

As parents, we best reflect the gospel when we forgive

Some of us need to be obedient to forgive our own parents, instead of being disappointed in them for not being God, being perfect in parents our lives

And as parents, we may need to learn to forgive our own children

If our children exist to make us look good, they will fail us

If our children exist so we can train them up, we will forgive them during those times (or even seasons) when they’re not learning their lessons well.

By forgiving well, both forgiving our parents and our children we teach two things:

Life in Christ, the gospel is about grace - we have been forgiven.

And, when we forgive others, we reflect the gospel of God’s grace through Jesus. And that’s why parenting is a picture of the gospel.

Tim Keller tells this story:

When the great American preacher of the 18th century, Jonathan Edwards died, only one of his daughters was present with him, while all the rest of his children and his wife were not there. He said, "I know I won't last the night out," so he turned to his daughter, Lucy, and he said, "Take this down. First of all, tell my wife that the uncommon union which has so long subsisted between us is, I think, a spiritual one, and therefore, one that will last forever." He said, "I want you to tell your other brothers and sisters it is about time they look to a Father who does not die."

In other words, he had to charge his children at the end: "Repent! I am not the real Father you need. I have just been a channel for the love that comes from the heavenly Father. Now that the channel is gone, you have to go to the source."

Parenting is a picture of the gospel only as much as we intentionally point our kids to who Jesus is, and what He has done, that they might in turn know who they are and how to live in pursuit of Him