

PARENTING: AGES 0-5

Building Wisely in the Early Years

I. Our Starting Place: Children are a Gift from God

Behold children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward, Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. Ps 127:3-5

II. Our Goal: To Steward Their Lives For Christ

a. Develop a long-term view of Parenting

He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation who heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God. Ps 78:5-8

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. Pr 22:6

b. Pray and labor to see Christ formed over time

My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! Gal 4:19

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Col 1:28-29

III. Working to Build A God-Honoring Home

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is 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. Eph 6:1-4

a. Remembering the Priority of Marriage in Eph 5.22-33

“The most important example that parents possess is their marriage. Our marriages preach. They preach a message that either attracts or repels our children. Parents who joyfully pursue God are contagious. Joyful sacrifice for the gospel is contagious. A gospel that makes parents stable, sincere, joyful, loving, affectionate, and humble is contagious. Children will want a God that produces these qualities.”¹

b. Helping our children understand the importance of obedience and authority.

“Embracing God’s plan for authority is necessary to understanding the world God has made. One of the first places children encounter authority is in their parents. God has commanded parents to govern their children, and for children to obey their parents. As we teach them to understand authority and submission, we are preparing them to obey God by living obediently and joyfully under all the authorities God has given. Unfortunately, the dominant culture we live in has rejected God’s plan for authority. One of the dangers we can fall into is to insist that our children obey without ever helping them picture the world in such a way that their obedience makes sense.”²

¹William P. Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 2009), 106.

² Ted Tripp, *Embracing God’s Plan for Authority*, The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood website.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Col 3:20

c. Recognizing we are parents under God's authority

“As a parent, you have authority because God calls you to be an authority in your child's life. You have the authority to act on behalf of God. As a father or mother, you do not exercise rule over your jurisdiction, but over God's. You act at his command. You discharge a duty that he has given. You may not try to shape the lives of your children as pleases you, but as pleases him...

Understanding this simple principle enables you to think clearly about your task. If you are God's agent in this task of providing essential training and instruction in the Lord, then you, too, are a person under authority. You and your child are in the same boat. You are both under God's authority. You have differing roles, but the same Master.”³

d. Pursuing a Compelling Parental Example

Fathers are not to exasperate, but to model God-honoring authority. Parenting will reveal our need for the grace of God as we encounter the idols of our hearts. Therefore parenting involves a pursuit of God's transforming grace.

1. Parenting that Exasperates:

- Poor Example
- Unreasonable Standards
- Inconsistent Discipline
- Harsh Responses
- Self-Righteous Training or Instruction

2. Idols that often rule our hearts:

- Unbelief
- Self-pity
- Impatience/self-righteousness/Arrogance
- Fear of Man

³ Ted Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), 28-29.

e. **Embracing our Primary Calling to Nourish, Discipline and Instruct**

IV. Focusing on Our Parental Call

a. Nourish - “bring them up”

“Let them be fondly cherished...deal gently with them.” John Calvin

“Love should be the silver thread that runs through all your conduct. Kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, patience, forbearance, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a readiness to take part in childish joys—these are the cords by which a child may be led most easily—these are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart.”⁴

b. Discipline – “in the discipline ... of the Lord”

1. Discipline orients our children to God’s authority
2. Discipline is loving because it restrains sinful behavior and enforces God’s standards

The Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.
Pr 3:12

3. Discipline involves the rod
4. Discipline must be consistent
5. Discipline gains us audience with our children

c. Instruct – “in the ... instruction of the Lord”

“He gives your children a mind that will receive impressions like moist clay. He gives them a disposition at the starting-point of life to believe what you tell them, and to take for granted what you advise them, and to trust your word rather than a stranger’s. He gives you, in short, a golden opportunity of doing them good. See that the opportunity be not neglected, and thrown away.”⁵

⁴ JC Ryle, Duties of Parents, pg.

1. Instruction that produces God-ward Orientation

- Regular Instruction from the Word (Deut. 6)
- Give them a God-centered Worldview
- Make it Fun and Age Appropriate

2. Instruction Aimed at their Hearts

- The Heart Leads to Behavior
- Behavior Reveals the Heart

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. Matt 15:18

“The central focus of parenting is the gospel. You need to direct not simply the behavior of your children, but the attitudes of their hearts. You need to show them not just the “what” of their sin and failure, but the “why”...You must help them see that God works from the inside out.”⁶

3. Instruction that reveals sin and need for Jesus

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child. Pr 22:15a

“Remember children are born with a decided bias towards evil, and therefore if you let them choose for themselves, they are certain to choose wrong.... If, then, you would deal wisely with your child, you must not leave him to the guidance of his own will. Think for him, judge for him, act for him, just as you would for one weak and blind; but for pity’s sake, give him not up to his own wayward tastes and inclinations.”⁷

“Your concern is to unmask your child’s sin, helping him to understand how it reflects a heart that has strayed. That leads to the cross of Christ. It underscores the need for a Savior. It provides opportunities to show the glories of God who sent his Son to change hearts and free people enslaved to sin.”⁸

⁵ *ibid.*, 7.

⁶ Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, Shepherd Press, Second Edition, 2005, pg.xxi

⁷ J.C. Ryle, *The Duties of Parents* (Conrad, MT: Triangle Press, 1997), 3.

⁸ *ibid*, pg 6.

V. Cultivating Parental Wisdom

a. Distinguish Between Principle and Practice

Principle

- Love your God
- Love your neighbor
- Do not lie
- Do not covet
- Do not steal
- Children obey your parents

Practice

- Bed time/Sleeping habits
- feeding habits/ scheduling issues
- home schooling
- types of toys, styles of music, use of videos

b. Train in ways that are age appropriate and developmentally reasonable *(Due to developmental differences expectations may need to vary widely from child to child.)*

Ages 9 – 20 months

- Beginning to train in basic issues of obedience, specifically self-control
 - No tantrums
 - No physical harm to others
- Understanding the command, “No”
- Correct Bad attitudes

Ages 20 months- 3 years

- Lot's of training: Think in categories of Respect for Parents/Adults and Kindness towards others
 - Coming when called
 - Responding the command, “No”
 - Learning to say please/thank you
 - Work on whining
 - Changing attitude when adjusted /No tantrums

- Greeting adults
- Sharing
- Learning to receive instruction respectfully.
 - Look in daddy's eyes when I speak to you.
 - Respond to clear instruction, "Yes, daddy" or "Yes, mommy"
 - Insist on full honorable attention when instructing (no looking away, no rolling of the eyes, no angry faces, no playing with toys)
 - Respond immediately, completely and cheerfully

Ages 3-4 years

- More Training--Don't grow weary in doing good. Continue to think in categories of Respect for Parents/Adults and Kindness towards others
- Continue to cultivate respect for adults and adult environment. (Ex. Not interrupting adults and training with, "Come into the room with your eyes and ears first, not your mouth.")
- More Discipline
- Practice of worship and prayer
- Simple Biblical, Gospel-centered instruction on issues like sin, God, and the need for a savior

Ages 4-5 years

- More instruction on issues of the gospel, the heart, sin, and their need for a Savior.
- Continuing to train and discipline. But there should be more verbal interaction on issues of the heart

Looking Ahead to Ages 6-8

- Discipline with the rod is typically less frequent
- Many patient reminders are needed
- More substantive instruction and dialogue on issues of the gospel, the heart, sin, and their need for a savior.
- It's is a season of reaping good fruit and a joyful home from faithfulness in the earlier years.