

*"Sew Your Heart To Theirs"*

ParentHood- Part 2

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### **Introduction:**

Today we are continuing in our *ParentHood* series... and I thought it would be good to show you *who not to go to for parenting advice!* ☺

But, in all seriousness...*who do you go to for parenting advice? Where do you turn for help?* There is NOTHING in my life that has brought me to the end of myself like being a dad to my four wonderful children!

My kids bring me great joy. I love each of them more than myself. There's nothing I wouldn't do for them at any cost. But, the truth is parenting is one of the most heart-wrenching/ bewildering/ faith-testing/ awe-inspiring endeavors any of us will ever embark upon. *Where do you turn for the best parenting advice.*

George is a well-regarded Christian researcher. In Barna's recent book "Revolutionary Parenting", he opens with this statement: *"Did you know that if you took all the books available today on parenting and divided them by the number of days in the years, you'd discover that there has been an average of ten new parenting books produced every day of the year for the past 21 years? That's more than 75k different parenting books currently at your disposal. That sure seems like overkill, don't you think? On the other hand, you can argue that such a vast quantity of parenting books would not have been produced unless there was a market for them."*

People are looking for great advice on parenting. People have questions in their role as parents that aren't easily answered. There is great demand for parenting wisdom...and that is why I felt it was time to do my first ever series on parenting.

I want to say right up front—*I'm not preaching this series because I view myself as an excellent dad...or in any way an expert on parenting. I wish I could be speaking to you know from the vantage point of a dad that has adult children that are well-adjusted, socially mature, following Jesus whole-heartedly... but I can't.* The truth is, I'm struggling every day along with my best friend/wife to raise great kids. You already my kids- they're great- but they're not perfect. They're going to be the ones swimming in the puddles at SpringFest and playing in the mud outside this building after the service. I don't have all the wisdom or all the answers...but, I can lead you in a discussion of what God has to say about being a godly mom or dad. I hope we can learn together.

The reason there are so many books written about parenting is because it is so important. All of us want to do a good job. Instinctively, we understand that God has given us children and that He expects us to raise them well.

We love our children. Children, like no one else in life, have a way of attaching themselves to your heart. It's like their little fingers and toes are strings attached right to the deepest core of your being. The love of a parent for a child is like nothing else.

I feel this every day from a unique vantage point. Ever see your kid in a crowd? You look out over the crowd and you pick him or her out and you watch from a distance and you just think: *To me...he's the most important one out there. He's the only one I have eyes for.*

Many of you know that I drive a school bus. If you have an elementary student at New Albany, you know that all 40 or so busses line up in the afternoons at the schools and the teachers walk their classes out to help each student find the right bus. For a good 10 minutes, kids stream by and the line of hundreds of children stretches all around the bus loop. Every day, as a dad, I do the same thing. I try and keep an eye on the munchkins on my bus and keep the chaos to a minimum...but mostly what I interested in is *finding my son*. I look out over all those kids...and I search for him. I want to see him. I want to watch him. I want to get his attention. I want to say "Hi!". I want to give him the "W" ("winner") sign.

We love our kids so much...and that is why it is so important to us to do well as parents.

I want to lay a foundation today. I want to define what is THE most important thing you must do as a mom or dad. You can do this for children if you AREN'T a mom or dad. But- if you have a relationship with children...and especially if you are a mom or dad...*Here is the most important part of your role description as a mom or dad.*

Parenting is so tough. You have great days- and moments of shier bliss. But, there are moments of horror...moments of confusion...moments of failure...moments that tie your heart up like no other relationship or life situation can do. With something so important... ***I think it essential that we know what the goal is.***

What we're talking about today: this is what you want to gauge success on. This is what you want to accomplish most. Even if you mess a lot of other stuff up as a parent... if you accomplish what we're going to talk about today—you will have done your job as a parent.

We're going to talk about the central goal of parenting. We're going to define the target for you. I'm not sure you'll find this message in books...and I think this will be helpful for you. You're going to leave here today knowing the one thing you MUST do as a mom or dad.

**Here's some more good news:**

- Since God calls you to this...what we're going to talk about today...you're not on your own. God will empower you to do what He's called you to do. You can do this.
- You don't need to have a certain economic status to accomplish what we're looking at today. Sometimes we feel that we have to have money to be a good parent. Money to pay for good schools. Money to get kids stuff they want. Money to give kids a better childhood than we had. Money to get kids into all the sports and camps and after school activities that we think they need to be a success in life. *I've got good news for you—good parenting...doing what is most for your kid... doesn't cost a dime.*
- You can begin what we're talking about at any time. See, some us feel like failures as a parent. Sometimes I watch my kids or I hear the way they speak and I think- *how is his mother going to fix him? No... I think, how is he going to turn out?* I feel like I've messed up. Maybe you feel that way today—you can start what we're going to talk about today. *It is never too late.*

You need to know that there are no perfect parents. Stop trying to be one. That's not what God is asking of you. We're going to see some interesting verses today- *it is almost like God knows we're going to screw up with our kids.*

- Your children are God's children. He gave them to you and He loves them more than you do. You're just a part of the puzzle... it is not all on your shoulders. He's even more concerned than you are that they grow up with a heart for Him and a desire to impact His Kingdom. Trust God.
- God is our best model for parenting...No matter what sort of parents we had...whether you had good or bad models in your mother and father...be encouraged that God is the perfect Father...***and he models for us the most important aim...goal...measure of success for parenting.***

We learn best about parenting by looking at our Heavenly Father. When I see God as a Father... I see five things He does and these five things reveal for us our most important role.

## 1. God Loves His Children

1 John 4:7-12

<sup>7</sup> *Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. **Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.*** <sup>8</sup> *But anyone who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.***

<sup>9</sup> ***God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.*** <sup>10</sup> *This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

<sup>11</sup> *Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.* <sup>12</sup> *No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.*

Notice a few key things about these verses:

- Love comes from God. Those that love *are a **child of God***. The Father defines His children by those that love like He does.
- God is love. So... how we show love defines whether we are like God.
- God showed His love... *by giving His **Son***. So, we not only have a loving Father...but a Father who shows His love by sending His Son. God's love was visible and costly!
- If we love each other...God lives in us and *His love is brought to full expression in us*.

Notice that last verse and think about its implication for parenting. *No one has ever seen God...But...If we love each other...God's love is brought to full expression in us*. What that means is that if we show love, *people see God in us*. Think about that... *Mom's and dad's... **God is saying that "by your love...your kids will see me."***

**Adult's here today.... *Our kids can't see God. But, they can see love. They can see you. Moms and Dads...they see how you relate to each other. When you really love... they see God in you. Moms and Dads... teachers...grandparents...neighbors...as you really love the children in your life... kids SEE God.***

*Why is this so important? **God has put children around us so they can see Him through us**. You...your love...is the window through which your children see God.*  
Wow...

## **2. God Is Good To His Children**

Matthew 7:7-11:

*<sup>7</sup> "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*<sup>9</sup> "You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? <sup>10</sup> Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! <sup>11</sup> **So if you sinful people (NO PERFECT PARENTS!) know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.***

Notice some things about this passage.

- Jesus' words here are in the context of a challenge on consistent prayer. He's saying that we need to keep on asking...keep on seeking... keep on coming before God and begging God to move in that area that is close to our heart. Even if it seems God is distant...even if the answer is a long time in coming...even if we're hurting...keep on begging our Father.
- The motivation for this intense prayer is that *our Father is good*.

- Notice Jesus' rationale here—*Parents- if your kids ask for something they need...you don't play around. Even as imperfect parents- Jesus makes it real clear there are no perfect parents- "you sinful people"- you give them **good gifts when they ask. What does this model? It models God's interactions with His children. When God's children come to Him- He gives good gifts!***
- What Jesus is saying here, again, parent—***you are the mirror that reflects God's goodness to your children. Your kids will learn that God is good by how you parent them!***

This is so important...God has given you the role of expressing His goodness to your kids. Mom and Dad...grandparent...teacher...mentor...*You have a large role in influencing the perspective of your child on whether they grow up believing God is good.*

I can't emphasize enough just how important this is. This is heart stuff here. This is life or death. This is at the core of what it means to be a socially- well-adjusted person. This is essential for emotional well-being. This is necessary for a sense of personal security and confidence that we want our kids to grow up with. **YOU CAN INFLUENCE WHETHER YOUR CHILDREN SEE GOD AS GOOD.**

**SEE, IF I SEE GOD AS GOOD:**

- **I am much more likely to live in His love and seek intimacy with Jesus**
- **I am much more likely to seek out His wisdom and live by His ways**
- **I am much more likely trust God and live by faith when life's dark times come and when storms rock my world.**

I just can't say it enough...how critical it is that we understand that our children will begin to form their faith by watching us. They will see or they will miss an expression of God by whether we love. They will see or they will miss gaining this sense of internal well-being that comes from a solid belief in the Creator of the world as a Good God.

**Psalm 84:11 (New Living Translation)**

*For the LORD God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The LORD will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.*

**Psalm 116:5 (New Living Translation)**

*How kind the LORD is! How good he is! So merciful, this God of ours!*

I have a simple...but so important question for you today: **Do you believe God is good?** Don't answer lightly...because if you've lived in this world long enough...*it is hard question to answer.* You have to look deep inside. You have to search God out. You have to spend time in God's Word.

I know you have faced hurts. I know you have unanswered questions. I know life isn't what you want it to be at times. *Do you believe God is good?*

You must answer this question... ***Because whether it is today or tomorrow...your kids will learn the answer one day. They will be able to tell. And, you will pass on to them a view of God as good or God as a God who deserves a skeptical eye.***

**Illustration:**

Silas is complaining as nightmares. One night upon going to bed, I said we need to pray about God helping him with his dreams. He said, *Dad, I did that last night and I had nightmares. God didn't answer my prayer. **What do you do with that?***

**3. God Disciplines His Children (In A Context Of Love and Goodness)**

**Hebrews 12:5-10 (New Living Translation)**

<sup>5</sup> *And have you forgotten the **encouraging words** God spoke to you as his children?<sup>[a]</sup> He said,*

*“My child,<sup>[b]</sup> don't make light of the LORD's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you.*

<sup>6</sup> ***For the LORD disciplines those he loves,** and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”<sup>[c]</sup>*

<sup>7</sup> *As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. **Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?** <sup>8</sup> *If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. <sup>9</sup> Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?<sup>[d]</sup>**

<sup>10</sup> *For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, **doing the best they knew how.** But God's discipline is always good for us, **so that we might share in his holiness.***

Notice:

- These are to be “encouraging” words ☺ God disciplines us because He loves us. God treats us as His own children by disciplining us.
- God's discipline is always good- *it leads us to share in His holiness.*
- But, notice this same theme again... Verse 10 confirms it- if you ever feel like you're messing up as a parent- you are. There are no perfect parents (*doing the very best they knew how*). But, part of our job is to introduce them to their perfect father.

**One of our chief roles as parents is to teach children that discipline has a positive role in their lives. It is our job to model discipline well so that they accept it from their Heavenly Father... so that our children might share in His holiness.**

This isn't culture's view of love. We're not talking about cheap, watered down, ooey- goey, helicopter/over-controlling parent-type love...We're not talking about give them anything they want. We're not talking about bribe them to behave...we're not talking about watering down discipline to the degree it doesn't exist... **Why does the world think that love= no (or easy) discipline?**

#### 4. God Breaks Through Sin To Reconcile With His Children

Romans 5:6-11

<sup>6</sup> When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. <sup>7</sup> Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. <sup>8</sup> **But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.** <sup>9</sup> And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. <sup>10</sup> **For since our friendship with God was restored** by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. <sup>11</sup> **So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.**

I love this passage for so many reasons... but as I looked at it afresh for this message on the central most important thing we must do as parents, I noticed something I've never seen before.

I've used this passage many times, because in it we see the nuts and bolts of the Gospel:

- Christ died for sinners.
- Paul points out that most people wouldn't even die for a good person...let alone a wretch.
- But God... He showed His true colors...love at all costs... by sending His Son to make us sons... and He did this **while we were still sinners.**
- This put in play a series of benefits we could find in no other way—**vs. 10... our friendship with God was restored. We can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God!**

Friends- I hope you have believed this message for your salvation. I hope you have accepted God's love and made Jesus the Forgiver and Leader of your life.

But, what if there is more to this passage than explaining the beautiful mystery of the Gospel. I'm not trying to be heretical and add something to Scripture. *But look at this as though it were a passage on parenting.*

If God is the ultimate Father- here's what we see: We've seen that God is love. We've challenged you to accept the Bible's view that God is good. God loves us enough and shows His goodness by disciplining us. But, **God's pattern is also to break through sin and provide the means for reconciliation. God, the Father, made possible...at great cost to Himself... relationship. Sin separated...God restored. Even while I was still in my sin...God made reconciliation possible.**

***What if this is not just a passage on the Gospel but a passage on great parenting?***

**God, our perfect Father, models for us that we must break through our child's sin and provide a means for reconciliation in our relationship.**

I don't know about you...but my most difficult moments as a parent comes at the points where my kids frustrate me the most. When they are most disrespectful...when they willfully disobey...when they can't seem to remember or just aren't willing to practice something we've been teaching them...

There have been too many times to count where my frustration has reached a boiling point. They do or say something...I react... and the relationship is fractured.

***It is at those points when I need to remember how God has fathered me.*** He reached down and sent Jesus, while I was still in my sin. He worked for restoration.

We've laid out the case for discipline. Discipline has a role...the it is the parent's responsibility to be sure that discipline is carried out in a way that the door is open for restoration.

## **5. God Establishes and Maintains Relationship With His Children At All Costs**

Here's theme of this message: ***Maintain relationship at all costs.*** Our most important role as parents (or anyone that knows a child) is to parent like God... and from what I can see in Scripture:

- God is love
- God is good
- God disciplines in love and goodness because He knows righteousness is for our best
- God breaks through sin to restore relationship...

If we're going to parent like God..., we've got to connect.

- Parents, this is your constant goal, focus, marker...
- If you can win this, you will win – don't let the peripherals/ little battles get you down

Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend in *Raising Great Kids*:

*When you encounter these periods of uncertainty, when you don't have an answer, a game plan, or a solution, the best course of action is to get connected with your children. When in doubt, connect. It never hurts, often helps, and sometimes is the entire solution to the problem.*

Much of Proverbs isn't rules and regulations...but a plea from a father to a son. The father, the author, is asking the son to give him his heart...to tune his heart to wisdom.

Proverbs 23:26:

<sup>26</sup> *O my son, give me your heart. May your eyes take delight in following my ways.*

Proverbs 3:1:

<sup>1</sup> *My child,<sup>[a]</sup> never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart.*

**This Week's ClearView Challenge:**

- Take an inventory of your parenting. Is your child seeing God's love and goodness by watching you? *What is one step you can take to improve this week?*
- What keeps you from breaking through sin to restore relationship? Courage? Time? Anger? *What is one step you can take to improve this week?*
- Find one thing (spending time, sharing words of affirmation) you can do or say with each of your children to sew your heart to theirs this week.