



**PARENTING**

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# THE MISSION OF PARENTING

## ▶ VIDEO 1

The reality of parenting is that many times we feel like we are living in a seeming world of contradiction between truth and reality. Scriptures speaks of children being a blessing (Ps 127:3-5), yet the question follows, "When does that happen?" We must understand the reality that children are born in sin and have a very capable sin nature within them (Romans 5:12) and that they are broken image bearers in need of restoration!

The goal of parenting then is to restore our kids to an ever increasing reflection of God's image. We are called to mold our children's hearts towards the things of God that they would become disciple makers. The reality is that too many parents are satisfied with compliance only and never attain to the ultimate aim for their children.

The role of then of parenting is to be the disciplers in the parent-child relationship. Consider the following passages as evidence to this God-given responsibility:

- Eph 6:2-4 (our God-role in our kids' lives)
- Col 3:20-21
- Deuteronomy 6:6-7; 11:19

The current status of parenting is a dismal picture to consider. Consider these statistics of why millennials are backing away from God and Christianity:

- College-aged millennials today are far more likely than the general population to be religiously unaffiliated.
- "One in four are unaffiliated with any religion, far more than the share of older adults when they were ages 18 to 29."
- Youth raised in homes that were to some degree "Christian," roughly three-quarters will jettison that faith after high school. Just under half of this number will return to some level of church involvement in their late 20s or early 30s
- Breakdown of the family. It has long been recognized that experience with an earthly father deeply informs the perspective about the heavenly father. In "How the West Really Lost God," sociologist Mary Eberstadt correctly asserts, "The fortunes of religion rise or fall with the state of the family."

- Lack of spiritual authenticity among adults. Many youth have had no -- or very limited -- exposure to adult role models who know what they believe, why they believe it, and are committed to consistently living it out.

## GRACE

### ▶ VIDEO 2

As we consider the predicament of our children's needs and the magnitude of our role as parents, we face what might feel like a hopeless situation (Ephesians 2:1-3). They have hardened hearts towards the things of God. They possess ignorant hearts towards the things of God. They live with vulnerable hearts towards the things of this world. They are completely "off course" which leads us to ask, "How did we win their affections?". To answer that question, we must first answer another, "How did *He* win *our* affections?"

Consider the passage found in Ephesians 2:4-6 which is built on the key phrase, "by grace you have been saved"

- "By grace". God being rich in mercy issued withheld what we deserved and gave a gift we didn't deserve. The was all issued out of His nature and character of LOVE
- "You have been saved". The gift was that God made us alive together with Christ, raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places

God's grace pierced our stubborn hearts rescuing us from eternal condemnation. That is the reality of our salvation and if there be any hope for our kids, they must experience in increasing measure God's grace. Here is the catch — you are the conduit through which that occurs! The goal then of grace is to soften our kids hearts towards the things of God. The corresponding role of grace is to develop relational security needed for healthy growth.

Ephesians 2:7, 10 outline the purpose of God's grace. Grace establishes and secures our relationship with God and this security enables us to grow and serve effectively. God's grace toward us is a continual moment-by-moment distribution of His love to us!

This relational security strengthens us for the task at hand. How?

- Promotes spiritual stability (Col 1-2)
- Builds trust as learn to depend on Him and His already-displayed goodness. He's a Good Good Father
- Vertical aspect

- For what purpose?

This relational security strengthens us for the task at hand. To what end?

- Making disciple makers (2 Tim 2:2)
- Suffering will be part of this task (*Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ. A soldier of Christ would do what Christ has commanded: Make disciples...*)
- It requires a devoted focus (not civilian pursuits)
- It requires doing it God's way (compete according to the rules -> coMISSION)
- It requires much hard work (hard-working farmer)
- Horizontal aspect

God grace also must first affect us personally Our hearts need be softened toward Him. We must first find our relational security to keep on keeping on in the task at hand.

God's grace must then affect our kids through us. Through us, God wants to soften their hearts toward us and ultimately towards Him. Through us, God wants to provide an environment filled with relational security so they can grow and ultimately serve. We are God's chosen instruments to be the dispensers of His Grace to our kids! We will dispense something of God to our kids...it's not a matter of "if" but of "what" they receive! The better we understand and embrace God's grace for our lives, the better we'll demonstrate that grace to our kids!

In conclusion, we must embrace grace as the foundation for the other three principles (Truth, Rules, and Discipline). The better we're able to live in light of God's grace, the better our kids will experience God's grace. The better our kids experience God's grace, the softer their hearts will be towards the things of God (His Truth, His Rules, His Discipline) through you. The softer our kids hearts are toward the things of God, the more their hearts will be molded and formed for Him. The more this happens: 1) Joy in parenting, Blessing in Parenting, Impact our kids will have on the world around them for the mission of God!

Practical Application - Internal Reflection

- How much do you understand about God's grace?
- How often do you functionally live in light of God's grace?
- How well are your kids experiencing God's grace through you?

# TRUTH

## ▶ VIDEO 3

The Bible presents a clear goal for the how the truth of Scripture is to impact the life of our children. This is most clearly outlined in 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Consider these outlined principles that should be built into our children in regards to the Bible and truth in their lives:

- Salvation - A primary goal for the truth applied to the life of a child is for the initial salvation of a child. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit and the promise of secured eternal life, children will never grow into the mature man/woman of God.
- Teaching - For children to become disciples of Jesus, they need to be taught the truth in an increasing way. Without a continuous flow of truth that impacts the thinking and context of a child's life, then he will not be able to increase in his understanding of his relationship to and friendship with God.
- Reproof - To become disciples of Jesus, a child needs to have his unbiblical thoughts and actions exposed for what they are. God always works in two ways in our lives, exposing the wrong and presenting the right. The truth must be present in order to expose the lies.
- Correction - It's not enough that we simply expose the wrong thinking of our children, but we must go to the next step and correct the error with truth.
- Training in righteousness - Children on the path of becoming disciples need training in the way of righteousness. It's not enough to know what righteousness is, but they need to be walked through the reasoning for it, the effects of it, and how to embrace it. That is training.
- Maturity - There is a goal to discipleship of our children and that is for an ever increasing inward and outward transformation. Maturity through the truth speaks to the inward transformation that a child needs to experience if they are to be a disciple and ultimately make disciples.
- Equipping for every good work - This speaks to the outward transformation that we want to ultimately see in our children. We do not want simple mental assent to christian values, but we desire children to be shaped and formed into disciples to pursue inward transformation and outward obedience and life change.

Ultimately we are raising our children to become adults who embrace and pursue truth. Our aim as parents is to see the biblical values of pursuing and embracing truth to be the virtues that lead a child into adulthood. In the example of Timothy we see the direct connection from that which he was immersed in as an adolescent being the mold of which he would embrace and become as an adult. This perspective must be in view as we engage and raise our children from infancy.

The role of truth in the lives of our children is to be first seen in our modeling. They must first see the work of truth in our lives as a validation of how the truth should impact their lives. Transparency is key.

Secondly the word is to instill the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7). Ultimately, our aim for our children is to prepare them for a life lived in reverence, honor, and friendship with Jesus. Knowing Him personally begins with knowing Him factually. Children need to know about Jesus before they can know of Jesus.

Lastly, the Bible assists us as parents to cultivate the unique person of your child (Proverbs 22:6). Our desire as parents must be to follow the truth of not only *what God says* about children but also *how He made* them. Children are not “blank slates” that need to be molded. This is the “Maturity in character and actions” that Paul spoke of to Timothy.

## RULES

### VIDEO 4

An inevitable and crucial aspect of parenting is the area of applying rules to our children. In this regard, our desire must ultimately be for children who honor and respect leadership/authority (Proverbs 1:8-9). This honoring of leadership falls into two main categories:

- **God:** As we apply reasonable rules of protection from a position of grace, we are preparing our children for a lifetime of living under the gracious headship of Christ in their lives. From an early age we want to model God’s authority over our children in a gracious way, but more importantly we want them to understand and humbly submit to God’s rule and authority even over them as children. They need to connect that our authority over them is given by God and ultimately their obedience to us is obedience to God.
- **Other Authorities:** Although the role of rules is for other more practical reasons, the goal for establishing them is for the purpose of seeing children learn to honor and

respect those who are in authority over them. Rules are not to instill compliance only, they are used to teach a respectable and humble attitude toward those in authority over us. Children learn this in the early stages of growth as they listen to and follow the rules that their parents give them.

As has been stated earlier, the ultimate objective is for our children to become adults who honor and respect leadership/authority of God and other authorities. We want them to grow to be adults that humbly embrace the rules that God has placed over them. In almost every case, adults who relate to rules in a healthy way were children who were lovingly trained to relate to rules in a healthy way.

Because we desire kids to embrace the heart of obedience, it is important to inform them of the reason behind the rules that are placed over them. Whether it be the specific reasons for every specific rule or not, children at least need to understand the spirit behind the rules and why they are generally in place. This does not in any way mean that we must always inform our children of every single reason why we do what we, but generally speaking it is best and most consistent with the model we have of God and how He informs us of the reasons for the rules He sets for us.

Rules should never be put in place because of convenience. They should be instituted for the expressed purpose of providing a clear boundary to protect your child from harm. To be clear, when we speak of harm, we are not merely speaking to physical harm. As is stated in the passage in Proverbs, the guidelines are for both physical but even more so for spiritual harm. It is not legalism to establish rules that protect your child from potentially morally damaging situations.

A current trend in parenting is an excessive over-protecting of children from any possible danger. This most certainly can become extreme as we have defined any and all dangers as worthy of our placing rules over. Often times these rules and hovering over our kids establishes a culture of non engagement with the world in the healthy way that God would want for our kids. The common cold, a skinned up knee, a tussle with another kid, exploring nature, etc are not the dangers that God is speaking of here. Rules should be enforced that would protect your children from morally and emotionally damaging situations like sexual abuse, abduction, substance exposure, or death. Let's be careful to allow our children to be "in the world, but not of it".

Biblical rules for children provide a balanced preparation for life under God & under the world system. A Godly and gracious upbringing is ultimately an opportunity to mold and prepare your children for their future lives as adults. To fully embrace the mission of God as adults, your children must learn to humbly submit to rules and respond with a pure heart to those in authority over them.



# DISCIPLINE

## ▶ VIDEO 5

The goal of discipline is to nurture children who learn from discipline and are changed by it (Proverbs 15:32-33, Hebrews 12:11). God's desire is that children respond to discipline with a desire to embrace the wisdom that it offers. A humble heart that is willing to admit wrong and learn from discipline is a wise child who will lead a fruitful and joy filled life, even when it is against their will.

Ultimately we desire for our children to become adults who learn from discipline and are changed by it. We want them to become adults who can respond to the discipline of God in a healthy way in order to be mature and stable believers. They must learn from discipline to be effective disciples and followers of Jesus on His mission.

The role of discipline in our children has these goals in mind:

- Bring an awareness to sin and its effect (Proverbs 22:15). Without discipline, children simply being to understand that their foolish and ungodly behavior is OK. In essence, to not discipline is to encourage sinful behavior and misrepresent the character to God to ur children.
- Bring wisdom (Proverbs 29:15). Discipline is what ultimately opens the door to wisdom in a child's life. When administered properly and consistently, it can slowly shape the viewpoint of child to that which is wise and from God. Whether they initially like it or not, discipline forces them to submit to the wisdom of God.
- Breaking the will (outer man, prideful will of a broken image bearer), not the spirit. Make no mistake about it, discipline is a battlefield that is not for the faint of heart. The battle that is being waged is the battle of the wills.
- Motivate a return to grace. Godly discipline should motivate the child to return to the loving safety of a life under grace. Rebellion is unsafe, unhealthy, and filled with grief.

Consider these biblical principles for how to administer discipline to your children (Proverbs 13:24, Proverbs 29:15):

- Conviction. God is clear that we must believe and develop the conviction that to love your child is to discipline them. God loves us and He disciplines us.
- Consistent. Threats do nothing, they only prove us to be liars. God doesn't lie and He is always consistent with us.

- Fair. The rule must be clearly explained along with the consequence. Children should know if they have disobeyed. God is always fair with us and gracious in our innocent failures. Make sure not to confuse rewards or payment with discipline.
- Effective. Discipline needs to be administered in a way that communicates the severity of the infraction. Your child must clearly understand the ramifications of their sin and feel the pain of the discipline.
- Harmless. Discipline should be painful in order to be effective, otherwise we risk fueling anger in our kids and confusing them. God is firm and His discipline hurts, yet He is always just and harmless. (verbal abuse aimed at tearing down their identity is harmful. It misrepresents God to them because God never does that.)
- Unique. Younger ages need to be disciplined in a Godly way (spanking) and also through other means that are effective in causing pain and awareness of the sin. If this is faithfully done when they are young, it will be much easier as they grow older. Discipline is still administered to older children but their methods can and should change. Caution: Do not categorically reject the biblical method of spanking at the expense of cultural pressure.