

Family Month 2024 pt. 3
Raise Up a Child

I. Introduction

- A. Today we continue our study of the importance of discipling children towards the Lord. So far we've seen the importance of being a child of God ourselves and the value and blessing of children as gifts from God. Today I'd like to give you some practical wisdom on how to effectively disciple children in the Lord.

II. The Problem of Failing to Disciple the Next Generation

- A. Last week we looked at Joshua's famous charge to the Hebrews. He told them to forsake the gods of Egypt and the gods of the pagan culture around them and serve the Lord. He famously said, "but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord." But that is not the end of the story. It is merely the end of that chapter. So what happens next in the story?
- B. When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the Lord which He had done for Israel. Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of one hundred and ten. And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. (Judges 2:6 - 10)
1. Moses discipled Joshua so that when he died Joshua could lead the people. Joshua left that responsibility to the elders of the people. We don't know what efforts they put into raising up the next generation. We simply know what the effect was "there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel."
 2. The results of this were devastating for the people of God.
- C. Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals, and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger. (Judges 2:11 - 12)
1. This is the story throughout the Book of Judges. It is one of the darkest chapters in the history of God's people. For our purposes today, consider the terrible danger when we fail, for whatever reason, to raise up the next generation.
 - a) They did evil in the sight of the Lord
 - (1) The Judges era was a time of violence, immorality, and greed. The farther the people drifted away from Yahweh and keeping covenant with Him, the more they increased in evil.
 - (2) Today we live in a world that is massively influenced by the worldview of secular humanism. According to this view, the farther that society gets away from religion, in general, and Christianity, in particular, the closer we will get to a utopian society. I don't care what your worldview is, that has been objectively disproven by the state of our society.
 - b) They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers
 - (1) Perhaps, the saddest words in the Bible.

- c) They served the Baals - followed other gods
 - (1) Remember how the book of Joshua ended? Joshua bravely chose to worship and serve the Lord with his household. The Hebrews agreed. They committed to put away the false gods of Egypt and the surrounding pagan peoples. Yet one generation later and they are fully immersed in worshipping any god but the True and Living God, Yahweh.
- d) They provoked the Lord to anger
 - (1) Throughout the book of Judges, God removes His blessing of protection from Israel. They are constantly under attack and subjugation.
- D. I believe that we are living in days of great darkness just like are recorded in the book of Judges. Generation after generation has increasingly wandered from and rebelled against God. When we consider the state of our society and culture we are living in the days of the Judges.
- E. But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power... (2 Timothy 3:1 - 5)

III. The Proverb of Discipling the Next Generation

- A. Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)
 - 1. This verse is cited so often in discussions of discipling children that I feel it is necessary to examine it today. Many godly parents have been beaten up by this verse (by themselves and others) when their adult children did “depart” from the ways of God. There are few hurts that cut as deeply as something that negatively effects our children. So for a godly parent whose child or children have turned away from the Lord, it is painful reality. There are some things that we must consider when reading this verse though.
 - a) First, as Adrian Rogers points out “there is a difference between a promise and a proverb.”
 - b) A proverb is a short witty saying that is meant to instill wisdom. Though proverbs are inspired by the Holy Spirit they should not be seen as strict promises. That is not the way they were intended to be read. Proverbs tell us how we should walk in wisdom and the desired end of walking in wisdom. They are not hard promises.
 - c) The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life. (Proverbs 22:4)
 - d) Would we take this verse as a promise that anyone who is humble will be guaranteed “riches, honor and life?” Of course not. We all have known people who were humble and loved God who did not have wealth, were not respected, and sadly even whose life was cut short.
 - B. Second, if you pay attention to actual words here we see that we are to “Train up a child *in the way he should go.*” The word “should” conveys possibility not certainty.
 - C. Thirdly, we also must understand that our children (especially as they mature) are responsible for themselves. Even someone who had perfect parents may reject God. Even someone with terrible parents may grow up to seek God.

IV. The Process of Discipling the Next Generation

- A. “Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 6:1 - 3)
1. Notice the goal of this discipleship model: “so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments...” This is meant to be at least 3 generations deep. But if each generation does this it will be a perpetual line of people who are faithful to God.
 2. God instructs the Hebrews to “listen and be careful to do [this].”
 - a) The New Testament also commands us to be careful and intentional in discipling our children.
 - b) Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. (Colossians 3:20 - 21)
 - c) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1 - 4)
 3. Notice that God gives some promises here to Israel if they do well at discipling their children.
 - a) “That it may be well with you”
 - b) “That you may multiply greatly”
 - c) “A land flowing with milk and honey.”
- B. “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.” (Deuteronomy 6:4 - 6)
- C. Theological Component
1. “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”
 2. As we disciple our children we need to remember that our first priority is to teach them who God is, what God is like, how God is faithful, good, righteous, and merciful.
- D. Practical Component
1. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all soul and with all your might.”
 2. This should sound familiar to us. Jesus quotes this when He tells us what the greatest commandment is. We should remember that discipling children also must include teaching them to love God fully. They are to love the Lord with all of their heart, all of their soul, and all of their might.
 3. Of course, we must lead them by example. If we want them to love God, we must love God.
- E. Sincerity Component

1. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.”
 2. It is vitally important that we teach our children that God is not honored by mere obedience to His commandments. What He really wants is for us to follow His commandments from hearts that sincerely love and worship Him.
- F. “You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall bind them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:7 - 9)
1. Diligent Discipleship
 - a) The word diligently here conveys “intentional effort.” This will not happen on accident. Rather, it would be more true to say that we will disciple our children one way or another but training them in the ways of God will not happen by accident.
 2. Daily Discipleship
 - a) Everywhere
 - (1) Sitting in your house
 - (2) Walking by the way
 - b) All Day Long
 - (1) When you lie down
 - (2) When you rise up
 - (a) This is why I am such an advocate for Christian education. Students spend thousands of hours in a desk at school learning someone’s worldview.
 3. Doorpost Discipleship
 - a) God tells the people to bind these commandments on their hands and foreheads. If you have ever seen an orthodox Jewish Rabbi, you have seen that they wear a black hat with frontals hanging on either side. They took the commandment so literally that they actually wear the commandments on their forehead.
 - b) I think God is stressing that these things should be kept in front of us. They are to be written on the doorposts of our house. Now I’m fine with putting Bible verses around the house but I think the bigger idea is that our homes would be places of intentional discipleship.
 - c) To say it another way, if we have Bible verses on every wall of our house and even tattooed on our flesh but we fail to live out biblical principles and do not apply biblical truths we have gained nothing.
- G. Listen, O my people, to my instruction; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God. (Psalm 78:1 - 8)