

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Drama of Parenting— Evangelizing Ephesians 6:1-4

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I. Introduction.

- A. In this final sermon on parenting as Christians I want us to finish by considering the privilege and responsibility to bring the gospel to our children.
- B. Repeatedly I have reminded you that the primary goal in parenting is to raise godly children into adulthood. Everything else is subordinate to this goal.
- C. The challenge can be in how this is done and this is because as parents we tend to fall into one ditch or the other rather than walking down the middle of the path.
 1. On the left is the tendency to affirm saving faith in your child because they in some way stated that they believed in Jesus.
 - a. This is the world I grew up in, where at very young ages children were urged to pray to have Jesus come into their hearts.
 - b. In other traditions you find this via the act of baptism for the infant. In that act there is the declaration that they are now saved.
 2. On the right is the tendency to be so suspicious of too quickly affirming their faith that you make it almost impossible for them to convince you.
 - a. Often this flows out of the right knowledge that salvation is something God does on our behalf rather than something we must do. Unfortunately it becomes a bit twisted.
 - b. This can lead to actually creating a heart that is really bent toward works because the child is working so hard to prove his faith.
- D. Evangelizing our children seems like a natural thing but it is often filled with misconceptions and assumptions that end up doing everything but evangelizing.
 1. We can assume that the kids will want to trust in Jesus Christ and therefore approach it quite lazily.
 2. We can also be so timid in evangelizing our children that all of the sudden we find them almost grown and there is still no appreciable spiritual

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growth. Sometimes this comes from not wanting to somehow force them into the Christian faith.

3. This all means we want to avoid the peril of assuring children that they are saved when they are not and, on the other hand, discouraging children who seem to express a desire to trust and follow Jesus Christ.

E. Ephesians 6:1-4 is our starting point.

1. Note how Christ-centered this whole thing is.
2. There is the idea that the child is being raised as a Christian. So you are teaching him to frame all of his thoughts with God as the center.
 - a. Every Christian parent here is to raise his or her children to be Christians.
 - b. So obedience is not the simple goal. Rather it is obeying in the Lord.
 - c. It is honoring your parents because God attaches a promise to that command. Not just because it is right.
3. Notice also that the parents are expected to raise them in the realms of discipline and instruction in the Lord.
4. Deuteronomy 6:4-7, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and 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.”
5. That is how the bible speaks of evangelizing your children. And that is what I want to work out with you today.

II. Evangelizing our Children.

- A. Recognize the need.
 1. None of your children are innocent, they are born under the power of sin and are defined in the bible as being sinners by nature.
 2. And as much as this is obvious as you read the bible it is astounding how easy we can become blind to the sin that binds the hearts of our children.
 3. Solomon tells us that foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child.

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4. God describes humanity in Genesis 6 as so sinful that the very intentions of our thoughts are only evil continually.
5. Jesus mentions it so casually that we can miss it if we don't read carefully. In Matthew 7 He says this, "If you then, **being evil**, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him."
6. Paul, writing in Romans gives us so many blatant statements of the desperate, spiritual condition that every person is in.
 - a. 2:4-6.
 - b. 3:9-18
7. Ephesians 2:1-3.
8. This is our reality, this is the reality of the condition of your precious children.
9. Therefore, we read in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
 - a. Born in sin, living in sin, and frankly, loving their sin, the wages is death, eternal death.
 - b. That is what your children need. That is what each of us need, a way of escape from the certainty of God's judgment and that escape is made clear in that passage, eternal life, is found in Jesus Christ and only Jesus Christ.
10. At the same time you should understand that your children are not usually hardened in their state of sin.
 - a. In Hebrews 3:13 the writer speaks about how sin is so deceitful that it lulls us into pits that capture us. But the image that the writer uses is that through sin's deceit it hardens us.
 - b. This is what you do not want to see occurring in your children, sin going unaddressed or allowing the child to be comfortable with sinning that it hardens them against your efforts in pointing them to trust in Jesus.
 - c. Take advantage of that lack of hardness and encourage them to talk and question and learn about God and what Jesus has done for them on the cross.

B. Understand the means.

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1. Beloved, when you look at your household what you must see are souls. Souls that are in one of two states, either they are souls that are trusting and resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross or they are not. There is no middle ground.
2. There is no trick or special technique that you need. It is simply the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Romans 1:16.
4. Act 4:8-12.
5. Remember to teach them the various aspects of the gospel.
 - a. Remember always first that the gospel does mean “good news” and that is how you should present it. There is hope because God did not leave us in our sin.
 - b. This means you must help them see the bad news, that they are sinners and that this is why they struggle in their obedience and respect. This is why bad things happen and why sickness and evil is present.
 - c. We have three great enemies who we cannot defeat—sin, Satan and death.
 - d. Explain and instruct how God resolves and defeats these enemies in His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - (1) Use stories in the gospels for children love stories and connect with them easily.
 - (a) When you read about Jesus raising someone from the dead like Lazarus point out how easy it was for Jesus to do it. Show them how death has no power over Jesus.
 - (b) When he walked on water how this shows Him to be Lord over creation. For Him, if He wants the water to hold him up, then it obeys. If He wants to multiply bread, it must obey.
 - (2) When you read the Old Testament make sure you don’t turn the stories into moral lessons on how to be brave or good or strong.

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- (a) Help your child see the glory and holiness and power and mercy of God in these stories.
 - (b) Help them see how sin messes everything up and how the three enemies are always present.
 - (c) Show them the shadows that point to Jesus such as the sacrifices and the priests. You will be amazed at the kind of discussions you can have with your 7 year old if you simply plan and prepare to read the bible with them.
- (3) Show how sin was resolved only through death but that it must be a perfect death and an infinitely worthy death. Teach them substitution—Jesus died in our place.
 - (4) Show them how death was defeated by His resurrection.
- 6. Finally, help them learn what it means to believe or trust.
 - a. This is seen by you modeling trust in God yourself.
 - b. But it is also by teaching them to trust you. A child who can trust you to catch them if they jump is one who is can learn that if my daddy is trustworthy how much more in God.
- C. Be a model of one whose faith is in Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Hypocrisy cannot be comfortable in your home and in your parenting.
 - 2. Make your faith something that you are always seeking to grow in. Take to heart passages such as:
 - a. 1 Peter 1:13ff.
 - b. 2 Peter 1:5-11.
 - c. Ephesians 6:13-18.
 - 3. Sing songs with them.
 - 4. Read the bible to them in every possible way.
 - 5. Show them what it looks like to believe and trust in Jesus Christ.
 - 6. Show them what it looks to like be holy and to grow in holiness.
 - D. Look for a progression of faith rather than a “moment.”

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1. If your home is overtly Christian, and I can only hope it is, then your child is utterly immersed in a gospel-centered, Christ-following, Bible-believing-and-living home.
 2. For some of your children there will come so crisis point in which they profess their trust in Jesus. But your job is not to try to create that crisis.
 3. Frankly, for many kids growing up in a solidly Christian home it is somewhat vague when they actually believed and came to trust in Jesus. There are some things you should look for though:
 - a. Look for a conviction of sin but remember that conviction can look different in each child.
 - b. Look for a grasping of the “facts” of the gospel. Often when I ask a young person why they think they are a Christian it becomes very obvious quickly that they have not really understood the facts.
 - c. Look then for the agreeing with those facts. That they are not debating them, diminishing them, mocking or rejecting them. There should be an embracing of them.
 - d. Then look for a hope and a resting in the gospel. This will show itself in various ways.
 - (1) A desire to obey and to follow God and His Word.
 - (2) A love for the Word.
 - (3) A love and desire to be with others who are Christians.
 - (4) 1 John gives many of these evidences. If you love God then you love those who love God. If you follow God then you do not love sin.
- E. Be careful about declaring what you cannot know; rather, seek to fan the flames of apparent faith.
1. The power that a parent wields with his child is massive and it can be used in ways that end up hurting them. One of the simplest ways is by coercing them to profess faith in the gospel.
 - a. This is the danger of the popular “sinners prayer.”
 - b. If you are a reasonably decent parent you can get them to supposedly pray to be saved at a very early age. But to then declare that they are, therefore, saved is very dangerous.

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2. I have talked to many parents and children about the child's faith. Usually I watch the face of the parent go from hope to shock or sadness as I talk to the child. But this is not good and I try to help them to be encouraged. This is not some exam, it is a process where you keep teaching and keep clarifying and praying with and for your children.
 3. I have told some parents that their son or daughter may be a Christian but that it is not real apparent yet and that is ok. There is no need to rush baptism. Simply encourage the child to keep doing what they are already doing. Grow in their knowledge and mature in their faith.
- F. Challenge false thinking and consistently bring truth to bear on all things.
1. This is the polemic (argument) and apologetic aspect of parenting.
 2. Every child will come up with foolish and even deadly ideas. In the early years you are the primary influence. But by 5 they are developing their own friends and the circles of influence is growing.
 3. You must always be alert to these moments. They are good moments and redemptive in nature if you seize them.
 4. Don't just silence your kid. Rather confront their thinking and have them defend their ideas. Bring the Word of God to bear, which means you are always wanting to grow in that knowledge.
 5. Don't allow your children to act contrary to Christ in your home. It is a Christian home and they are to conduct themselves properly as they were taught.
 - a. Don't buy into the foolish lie that if they have not confessed Jesus Christ as Lord that somehow they are exempt from proper behavior.
 - b. You don't get a pass on lies, hate, gossip and theft just because you decide you don't want Jesus.
 - c. You confront those actions and you show how they are flowing from a heart that loves them. You bring them back to the reality that they are storing up God's judgment upon themselves.
 6. Have a strong hand in who your children hang with, especially as they get older.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Don't look for that "moment" or "event."

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- B. Start from the very beginning of their life to pour the gospel into them.
- C. Pray for them while in the womb. Pray for them as they grow. Pray, pray and pray. It is God who saves so pray to God to save.
- D. Be patient with them.
- E. Hate sin in first yourself and in them. Let them see that sin is our common enemy and Jesus is our only hope.

Community Group Questions

1. Have two or three people share their testimony, especially if they came to faith in a Christian home.
2. What was the one thing that you were challenged by in this sermon and why. Let them know this question is coming early so that they can think on it.
3. What needs to change perhaps in your approach to evangelizing your children?