

When I was 18 years old, playing basketball at Gardner Webb...riding the pine...11th or 12th guy on the team, I entered a scrimmage game against Presbyterian College. I eventually ended up on the foul line to shoot two free throws. I took my normal five dribbles and I looked up to shoot...and right above the top of the backboard I saw a man sitting by himself at the top of the arena. I squinted hard...and took another dribble without looking down...it was him...that man was my dad.

My dad had driven to Boiling Springs to watch me play in a scrimmage game. After the game, I met him in the lobby and I said, “Why did you leave work early to drive all this way to watch me play in a scrimmage game.” He said, “Because you’re my son and I’m proud of you.” Those words will reside in the recesses of my brain until Jesus calls me home: “You’re my son and I’m proud of you.” Those are words that a child needs to hear.

We continue in our series:



“Proverbs for the Marriage and Family,” and for the last two weeks, we’ve talked about what wives need and what husbands need and today we’re going to talk about “What Children Need.”

Now, as we talk about children today, my mind was drawn to Timothy. You remember Timothy. He was the one whom Paul wrote two books and said in 1 Timothy 4:12: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish grandmother and mother, Lois and Eunice. Scholars say he was probably no older than late teens when he joined Paul on his second missionary journey. Timothy was from the town of Lystra, and that’s where Paul was almost stoned to death. And so, it’s amazing his family let him go with Paul. But, they honored God with their faith and trust in Paul. Let me show you what Paul said about Timothy.

2 Timothy 1:5

⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

2 Timothy 3:14-15

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom^{14a} you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Timothy was taught by his grandmother and mother from the time he was a baby and that developed into what Paul called a “sincere faith.” His mother and grandmother were Jewish and the passing along of the faith in God was expected and we can literally trace this idea back to Proverbs 22:6.

Proverbs 22:6

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

Now we’re talking about what a child needs...and what a child needs is: to be trained, just like Timothy was. Children need training. But, as we look at this verse, it’s often misunderstood. This verse is quoted totally out of context by many people. They see this verse as a promise that if they have a kid who goes off and “sows their wild oats”...just because they brought them up in a “Christian home,” or took them to church...they’ll automatically come back to God. Here’s the problem: that’s not what the verse says. Look at it again...and notice the word “even.”

Proverbs 22:6

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

Do you understand...they’ve never walked away. They have continued...or as Jesus taught...they abided in the vine or remained. Now this doesn’t mean that a person won’t sin...that’s ridiculous. But it means that the training will carry them to and through old age. Now, let’s make sure we don’t misunderstand the other way...this verse is not a guaranteed promise. Instead, it’s a principle. A promise is a guarantee...but a principle is an axiom that’s usually true, but not always. Many people mistake this and other proverbs for airtight promises. Many see this verse as meaning: “if you do X, then you will get Y as the result.” Sometimes that’s not true.

We all know raising children is not an exact science. KIDS HAVE FREE WILL AND YOU, the parent, CAN DO RIGHT BY YOUR CHILD AND THEY CAN STILL WALK AWAY (and we’re going to have an entire message on that coming up soon). And the problem is: while it’s their choice...as unfair as this is...the consequences will not only affect them, but also you. But there’s hope and we’ll see that in a few weeks.

Now the key to Proverbs 22:6 are the two words “train up.” Those words in English come from one word in Hebrew which means: “to dedicate, or set apart, or make experienced.” It’s what we do at dedication services. In fact, in the Old Testament, it’s only used four times and three of those was when a building was being dedicated. But here it’s used in relation to the dedication of a child. The idea is that you as parents, intentionally dedicate your child and yourself to raising them in the Lord.

So, what does this look like? What did Lois and Eunice do in raising their son to trust the Lord (even when his father was absent...which gives single moms great hope)? Look at it again...

2 Timothy 3:14-15

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom^[a] you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Children need to be taught the Word of God and this will ground them and guide them throughout life. Yet, in many homes, the Scripture is seldom cracked. Listen, I worry about us as American Christians and I say this all the time: nothing that your child can possibly DO or ACCOMPLISH on this earth is more important than getting them to heaven. Oh yes, we want our kids to go to heaven, but sometimes I think we try harder to get our kids into college or to make travel ball team than we do to get them to heaven. If you look at the time and investment we make to the academic and

athletic endeavors, versus the spiritual endeavors, in our children's lives, you'd be hard-pressed to convince an honest observer that you were genuine in what you say. Because it's not what you do!

Truth is: we'd really just like to bring them to church and someone else do that for us. Just like Door Dash bringing food to our door. Just take them to church and they'll be good. Listen, it's not enough. Unfortunately, even in Christian homes, there's a lot of out-sourcing when it comes to our kids, but we can't outsource the job of training our children in the Lord. Why?

Because it's a command to the parents. Proverbs 22:6 is a command given to parents to train up your child in the way "he should go." And I'm going to show you what that means, but first, I want you to understand what a limited amount of time we have. It's been calculated:

75% of the time you will spend with your kids will be over by the time your children turn 12 years of age, 90% by the time they turn 18.

That's a short and compacted time. And I would go even further...having raised four kids...and honestly tell you: by the time your child is about 8-9 years old...your child's behavioral tendencies are set. So that means from birth to about 8-9...those are tough years...but, not as tough as the teenage years, because if you don't lock in early on training your kids, you will spend the rest of your life trying to fix what should have been trained into them when they were young. Scripture teaches something about young children:

Proverbs 20:11

11 Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.^[a]

The word "child" that's used there is the Hebrew word: "na-ar" and it's the word for what David was when he killed Goliath...he was a "lad or adolescent." Do you see, by the time your child hits the teenage years...they're locked in...there is little changing them...so, you have to train from infancy and you have to be very intentional. Pastor and author Chuck Swindoll says in his book:

CHARLES R.
SWINDOLL



Parenting

FROM SURVIVING
TO THRIVING

BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES IN A CHANGING WORLD

"Parenting from Surviving to Thriving:"

"Your children are making themselves known every day. Don't drift. Don't let your senses get dull. Don't ignore what you're hearing and seeing. Pay attention to your children while they play. Carefully observe what they do, how they do things, and what they enjoy. Those are eloquent clues, frequently repeated. So, pay attention!" Charles R. Swindoll, "Parenting from Surviving to Thriving"

Are you paying attention to your children! As parents, we want to observe so that we can train and provide what our children need...and now I want to show you what's going to guide the rest of our time together. Take a look:

What Do Children Need:

1. To have established their God-given Identity
 2. To feel valued with words, love and hugs
 3. To have your time -- children spell "love" T-I-M-E
 4. To have routine and order
 5. To learn courage
-

Now, there are many other things children need...this is simply a summation and we'll break these down and within these five, we'll see even more of what children need. But for now, before we break these down...I thought this summary from Swindoll's book was instructive:

"Cultivate a thirst, initiate a hunger, create an appetite for spiritual things in the lives of children of any age, as long as they are living under your roof, and do it in keeping with the way they are bent—disciplining the disobedience and the evil, while affirming and encouraging the good, the artistic, the beautiful. As children begin to grow into adults, their paths will be aimed directly toward the Savior, and they will continue to walk in His sovereignty." Charles R. Swindoll, "Parenting from Surviving to Thriving"

So, let's begin, #1...

What Do Children Need:

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Identity is a "buzz word" in our culture today. What is your identity? Are you a boy or a girl? Are you a man or a woman? Are you a cat? It's crazy...some people believe they are. Mom and dad, it's absolutely vital that you're intentional and diligent in helping your child understand who they are as an **image-bearer of God**. They are made in the image of God and the ultimate goal is to get them to His Son, Jesus. Your child needs to be saved...it's that simple. And researcher George Barna says we have a short window. According to Barna:

"Only 6% of people in America get saved after the age of 18." *George Barna Research*

Do you get that...if a person gets saved...94% of the time, it happens before 18. Mom and dad, the salvation of our children and their subsequent training must be the priority of the home. You want your child to go to heaven, don't you?

You say, "Yes, of course." But what are we doing in our homes that would lead to that outcome, besides just bringing them to church? Are you reading the Bible with them? Are you praying with them? Are you helping them to have an "eternal perspective" on life...not just an "American dream" perspective of life.

Listen, we say we're raising our kids in Christian homes, but in so many cases, we aren't. In many homes there's not much Christian that goes on, other than a bed-time prayer. The rest of the time, we simply live like the rest of the world. We chase what the world chases...and **we don't properly define success**. Not according to God. No, success is not about money, cars, homes, stuff. Success is embracing what God has designed you to do and then doing it. It's...

Matthew 6:33.

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

In the case of children, that's learning how your child is "bent" by God and training them in that bent...in the way they should go. God's way...not yours. More on this next week, when we see "The Role of Parents" in the home. #2

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Were you hugged as a child (in a proper way)? If you weren't, I'm sorry...whether that be an improper hug...or you weren't ever hugged. Kids need love that shows up in proper hugs. There's something about the hug of a parent to a child...even when they're older...oh, they may push you away...but, deep down...they love the hugs. This helps them feel valued. Dads...if you don't hug your daughters...she'll seek that affection and attention from another male. Believe me. I've watched this throughout my life. It's true.

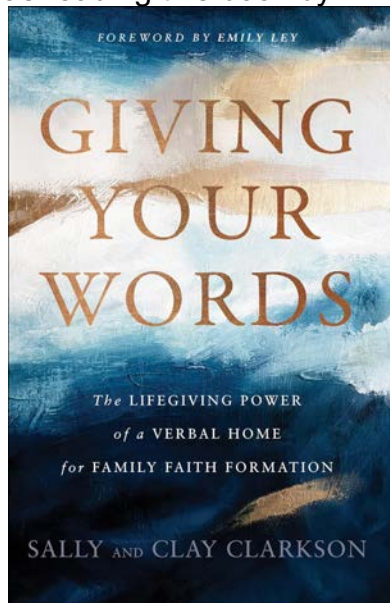
Children need to feel valued...and another way we do this through our words. How many of us were wounded as a child by what someone said to us: "You'll never amount to anything." "You're so dumb...why don't you act like your brother?" "Oh, you're not as pretty as your sister...I guess she got all the looks in the family." Those kinds of comments stick with a person forever. Listen...

Ephesians 4:29

29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

We need to build up our children with words.

In preparation for this message, I was reading this book by:



Sally and Clay Clarkson: "Giving Your Words, The Lifegiving Power of a Verbal Home for Family Faith Formation." I want you to see this quote:

"It's not about creating a checklist of words to be sure you've spoken to your children. Rather, it's about creating a verbal atmosphere in your home where living words are breathed in and

out as naturally as oxygen.” Sally and Clay Clarkson, “Giving Your Words, The Lifegiving Power of a Verbal Home for Family Faith Formation.”

Living words...life-giving words. What kind of words are those? Take a look...Life-giving words tell them:

Life-Giving Words Tell A Child:

- You are secure.
 - You are worthy
 - You are special
 - You are capable
-

Some of you would pay a lot of money to have heard those kinds of words when you were little. You know why? Because those kinds of words make kids feel safe. Children want to know that they're a blessing and not a burden. Remember you can say all the right things...but, your tone of voice and body language is 75% of what you say.

Listen, there must to be times when you look at your child and say to them: “Have I told you lately what you mean to me?” And then you recount to them what they're good at. That's you thinking through how they're bent. You recount to them their gifts and abilities, (no, not to build pride into them), but to encourage them by telling them how God has bent them. #3

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Please, mom and dad, don't buy into the lie that QUALITY is enough. It's not! Kids want QUANTITY time. Again, kids spell LOVE, T-I-M-E. So, how much time do you actually talk WITH your kids...not just AT them? There is a difference you know. Rules without relationship lead to rebellion. One of the best places to talk to your children is **at the dinner table**. Do you do that? Or do you eat out of a bag inside your vehicle most of the time? So many families are running around like chickens with their heads cut off. You have very little time to actually be a family, because you're so busy trying to have it all!

I read a story the other day that described how a child had turned in a homework assignment for what they wished. The child wrote: **“I Wish I Were a Smart Phone.”** The child proceeded to describe how she wished she could be a smart phone because then, maybe her parents would pay attention to her. She said, “My dad plays games on his phone, but not with me. And my mom types out what's she's doing on Facebook, but it's not with me.” Ouch! Mom and Dad...you expected me to say, take the phone or i-pad out of their hand...yeah...we need to...but you need to put down your phone and look at your children in the eyes...spend time with them.

And BTW...what are you feeding your kids. For the sake of time, many families feed their kid's junk. Are you kids getting the right nutrition? I read this the other day that somebody reposted online from “Organic Mamas.” It said this:

“A child who eats 2 cups of Kraft macaroni and cheese, a small bag of Skittles, and 8 ounces of Crush Orange will consume 102 milligrams of artificial food dyes. Behavioral tests found

as little as 30 milligrams can cause neurological issues for your children. Then parents are told their kid has ADD/ADHD.” Organic Mamas

Proper nutrition is so important for children. Many are vitamin deficient. We've got to get rid of the junk food. Obesity among our children is epidemic. They've got to have vegetables...fruits...good, quality food. Have you ever watched a child after they've eaten a bag of Skittles? Listen, if you have a child with what you believe are behavior and attention problems and you go to a doctor...and all they offer you are drugs...they never bring up anything about the kid's diet, sleep, exercise...I would encourage you to go get a second opinion. So much of what children need is wrapped up in proper diet, sleep and exercise. And this will help them to grow healthy and be able to concentrate and be able to process and cope with life.

And I believe I need to say something about drugs. Not meth, weed, cocaine...I'm talking about the propensity to drug our kids and label them with that alphabet soup that begins with ADD, ADHD. Listen carefully, I'm not a doctor, I don't claim to be...but I am an observer. In December I'll have been married 33 years, 4 kids, 6 grandkids...in January I will begin my 19th year as one of your pastors and in March of next year, I'll begin my 56th year on earth. And I've watched and observed a lot over my life.

You see, when I was kid there were no drugs for kids. You want to talk about drugs...you got drug to church. That's the kind of drugs we had. But, as time has gone along...we let the kids do what they want to do and when they're acting out and flipping out...well, we just medicate it...we don't try to fix it...we just diagnose it and medicate it. That's my observation. We're a society on drugs. Adults and children. So, I want to tell you what can help. #4

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 4. **To have routine and order**
 5. To learn courage
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We need routine, order and structure in our lives. Many homes don't have this, but kids need it. They need consistency and routine in their lives. Do you have routine in your home? Do you eat meals at fairly consistent times (young kids need this), consistency at bedtime (same time every night, as much as possible), routine: brush their teeth, wash their face, bedtime prayers.

Listen, they need and crave routine and when they don't get/have it...they get anxious and afraid and they often act out. Kids act out when they're anxious. You say, ADD, it's ADHD...maybe... and again, I'm not saying ditch all the medicine...but, before you medicate your kid...look at your home... look at what your routine, predictability. Often times, children ask: "What are we doing tomorrow, what's next?" They want routine...is there a rhythm in your home...like a song...rhythm makes a song beautiful...you can count to it. What's your home like? Children need routine and order. #5.

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Let me show you a picture: Who is that?



Yes, that's Daniel in the lion's den. I want to offer you the reason I believe Daniel was able to pray to God, even when it went against the government...and the man in charge...and why Daniel was thrown into the lion's den without crumbling. I'm convinced the reason he was able to face the lion's den is because of the courage he learned in his parent's den.

In my mind Daniel was trained by parents who had to have taught him to fear God over man, no matter what. Daniel had been hauled off from Israel and taken into captivity in Babylon as na'ar...a youth. And yet, he refused to bow the knee to a false god, even though it could cost him his life. You see, that kind of courage didn't just materialize the moment he faced the lion's den...no...he was taught courage in his parent's den.

For our children to navigate this upside-down world, (that BTW is only going to get worse...Scripture says, "For men will wax worse and worse") they're going to have to be trained to be courageous. That means they are going to have to be trained to do the right thing, every time. And they're going to have to be trained not to lie. Mom and Dad, you have to nip lying in the bud...immediately. Lying and deception leads to carnality...this has to be broken in your home, or it can destroy your child. And we'll talk more about this when we get to the messages coming on discipline.

For now, ask yourself, "Am I training my kids to be courageous?" Do you want to know how they learn courage. Not just by you talking about it...but watching you. They watch you be courageous. They watch you make the hard decisions, even when it might cost you money, or your job. They watch you be honest, even when it would be easy for you to lie. And they learn courage! Daniel showed courage in the lion's den because of how he was trained in his parent's den.

What are you modeling in your home? Is it anxiety or courage. I was recently on a college campus where I saw a male student with a mask on OUTSIDE...in my mind the thought came to me: he's not been raised to be courageous. He's healthy as an ox...I wonder if he would've stormed the beaches of Normandy in WWII, knowing death awaited. So many of our kids have been programmed for fear and anxiety. We need to be training our kids to have courage! What do children need?

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And so, we end where we began. Yes, I was looking over the backboard at GW and I saw my dad who had come to watch me play in a scrimmage game, where I scored a whopping 3 points against a nobody team, but I heard say: "You're my son and I'm proud of you."

Church, what are we living for? For Jesus...for heaven, right? So we know Jesus is seated in heaven...not a gym...looking over the balcony of heaven, not a backboard...and we seek to honor Him with our lives. We're not dribbling a basketball...we're trying to navigate this crazy life...as sojourners...as pilgrim's dribbling through...so that one day we can hear Jesus say: "Well done good and faithful servant." Now, that's what every child of God wants to hear!
