

BIBLICAL PILLARS FOR A FAMILY FOUNDATION

Pillar Eight – Parenting

NOTE: We can't cover all these notes. The extra parts are for you to consider and use on your own time.

I. Introduction

A. My thinking on parenting is influenced especially by Proverbs, Larry Crabb and Dan Allender's unpublished 1984-1985 class notes on Marriage and Family, Tedd Tripp (Shepherding a Child's Heart) and Paul David Tripp (Age of Opportunity). I have also learned a great deal from Robert Lewis (Real Family Values) and Dennis Rainey (Homebuilders®, *Family Life Today*).

B. Parenting is

- **Important** because it changes futures for multiple generations;
- **Tough** because those of us who parent sin while teaching and disciplining our children to not live sinfully;
- **Rewarding** because there are precious times with our children while they are growing up, because we get to see God's grace on display, and because there is no greater joy than to see our children walking in the truth (3 John 4);
- More than anything, parenting is **identification** with God.

II. Parenting is a Spiritual Work

A. *Parallel between "natural" and "spiritual" parenting* **1 Thessalonians 2:7-11**

1. Gentle... as a mother and affectionately desirous of you.
2. Willing to impart the gospel and our own lives.
3. We labored and anguished night and day to not be a burden.
4. Proclaimed truth of the gospel and lived holy, just, blameless lives
5. We exhorted, comforted and charged you like a father does

B. Biblical Parenting cannot be done in our own strength

1. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain... (Ps 127)
2. He is at work in you to will and to do his pleasure (Phil. 2:13)
3. Lead them towards maturity, striving according to his strength (Col. 1:28-29)

C. Biblical Parenting will reveal or **expose** our weaknesses

1. Our lack of knowledge, judgment and skill are exposed
2. Our lack of strength, patience, love, consistency are exposed
3. Our idols are exposed (things more important to us than God)
4. We will see our tendencies to pull away from relationships or dominate relationships when our pain gets sufficient
5. We will either move towards God or away from Him when these things show themselves. (See James 4:8-10)

III. Effective parenting has four primary characteristics

- A. The dad accepts the leadership responsibility
- B. The mom and dad are on one page
- C. The children know they are not the parents
- D. Parents continually answer every child's unspoken question "*Am I Loved*" "Yes" and their unspoken question "*Can I Have My Own Way*" "No."

IV. Goal of Parenting: Shepherd the heart, not just control behaviors (T. Tripp, L. Crabb)

- A. Much parenting is geared for convenience of parent
 - 1. Our embarrassment or our frustration
 - 2. Non-irritating behavior gets little attention, though it may show signs of living independently of God or indifferently to man.
 - 3. With bad behavior, our goal is often just getting them to quit the behavior but the greater sin is what the behavior reveals about their heart, (e.g., defiance of God or pleasing people brings life).
- B. Example of our heavenly Father's focus on our heart
 - 1. **Isaiah 1:11-17**
 - 2. **Matthew 15:7-9**
- C. Reason Proverbs are directed at young people "choosing" to heed correction/instruction is that the choice to hear is the best example of where the heart is.
- D. Realize that behavior is an outflow of the heart (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:18-20). Our job is to address the heart, which the behavior reveals. Parents must constantly make themselves aware of & respond to both heart and behavior in themselves and in their kids. God is our example.

V. How do I Shepherd the Heart?

- A. Start where God does – you are their authority (yet you, too, are under authority)
Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4, Proverbs 13:24
- B. Examine your **own goals** for how you parent
 - 1. Why do you want them to succeed with school, sports or behaviors? Is it 1 Cor. 10:31 and 2 Cor. 5:9 or is it more concerning how we will feel – *like pride* – if their life goes well?
 - 2. What are God's goals for them learning well in school and socializing well and playing sports?
- C. Where appropriate, shift **goals you have** to **godly goals**
 - 1. If motivation is for you, your correction of them will not be in love but will born out of fear and control (see 1 John 4:18)
 - 2. If motivation is for you, children will feel pressure and resent it
 - 3. If motivation is for you, God becomes your servant rather than other way around; anger or despair will likely control you.

- D. Helps to know God's requirements for us as parents
1. God holds us responsible to be good parents but not to raise good children.
Parents' job is to be faithful in instruction and correction (Eph. 6:1-4). (**See also Prov. 13:1**)
 2. Proverbs shows us leaving the response choice to the children.
 3. God shows us with Hell ("*God's greatest compliment to man*").

Please be sure to read the following Appendices for your homework.

Appendix One

I. Goals of parenting younger kids (T. Tripp)

- A. **Obedience:** (0-6) – Willing submission to authority of parents without challenge, excuse or delay. Doesn't mean there are no "appeals" but does mean that the appeals are made on the way to obedience rather than as instead of obedience. This requires instruction, consistency, correction and discipline. If they aren't instructed, we can't expect them to follow. If we aren't consistent, they are unlikely to learn what we value. If we are quick to admonish and not patient enough to correct at times, they'll lose heart. We must also see that in certain cases (especially defiance), physical discipline is called for.
- B. **Character:** (7-12) – Honesty, dependability, humility, loyalty, diligence, self-control, moral purity, etc. Here we are not interested in asking 10 year old Jason to clean up his room because we said so – that is an obedience issue. Rather, we are asking him because we believe he is old enough to understand the concept of responsibility for possessions and for the house (which we have taught him) and we expect him to discipline himself to those purposes which are family values we hold.
- C. **Three areas** you examine with your child every so often are his relationship with God, himself and others.
 - 1. What does he actually think about God? Does He see God as He is? Does he choose obedience to God (with no reward)? Does he talk about God? Does he pursue a personal relationship with God? How biblical is his worldview?
 - 2. What does he think about himself? How accurately does he see himself? His strengths? His weaknesses? Is he fearful? Does he rely on others inappropriately? Does he see his future soundly?
 - 3. What about his relationships with others? Does he respect his parents? Does he get along well with peers? Is he courteous? Does he listen well? Is he a gossip? Does he choose friends well? Does he handle relationships with the opposite sex appropriately? Does he use people or minister to them?

II. Goals of Parenting Teens

- A. Remember: You are in charge. (Gen. 18:19, Prov. 22:6; 1 Tim. 3:4-5) Authority and responsibility are yours.
- B. Remember: Be more focused on the heart than the behavior – yours and then the child's. (Matt. 7:1-5; Prov. 22:17-19; 20:5)
- C. Note that the Proverbs are nearly a "Parenting Teens" textbook – they are from a dad to a son. It says "My son" as in 1:8, 31:2, etc. 23 times.
Note the topics covered:
 - ❖ turning away from violence and intoxication,
 - ❖ avoiding bad friends,
 - ❖ use of the tongue,
 - ❖ sexual immorality and the joy of marital intimacy,
 - ❖ proper views of money and work,
 - ❖ heeding correction

The son is older than a young child with characteristic instruction and expectation of obedience and younger than adulthood when you have decided how you will live. It is during the period of choosing how you will live your life – in reality, an *ongoing discussion between a dad and his son in the years of young manhood – probably age 12-18*. It supplies the kinds of instruction we need to pass on to our children and a helpful attitude by which to teach.

- D. There are three famous examples in the Bible of a father with a disobedient teenaged son we can learn from.
 - i. In Luke 15, we have the **Prodigal son**. (Practice mercy.)
 - ii. In 2 Samuel 13, **Amnon** raped his half-sister Tamar. (Face the truth and render discipline where required.)
 - iii. In 1 Samuel 1:3 and 2:12, ff., we meet the priest in Shiloh, **Eli**, and his two sons, **Hophni and Phinehas**. (Face the truth and render discipline where required.)
- E. Get to know your teenaged child
 What's important to your kids? Can you describe their priorities? What are their role models, dreams, career aspirations, convictions (what they believe and will support by actions when no one is watching). What are their fears? How do they compare themselves with you (strengths and weaknesses)? What subjects do they enjoy?
- F. Remember **James 1:19** (Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak and anger) and **Proverbs 18:13** (He that answers before he hears a matter, to him it is folly and shame)

III. Evaluation of your parenting

- A. Would your child or teen say that you
 - 1. keep appropriate confidences? _____
 - 2. discipline publicly or privately? _____
 - 3. listen to them until they finish or interrupt them? _____
 - 4. look at them while they speak or too busy? _____
 - 5. correct their feelings more than listen? _____
 - 6. limit their sharing or draw them out? _____
 - 7. pursue them with careful interest, avoid them, drill them with a series of questions? _____
 - 8. follow your words with actions? _____
 - 9. are aware of their activities, friends, struggles? _____
- B. Parents Can Learn to Listen Better
 From Radio Bible Class Publication's (RBC) *Getting to Know Teenagers*.
 - 1. Don't make light of your child's problems — it exasperates them.
 - 2. Be open about your own faults. Humility and integrity is important and always with an eye to God's holiness and grace.
 - 3. Develop ground rules for speaking, first for yourself and then for them. Some helpful passages to consider on this are everything in the book of Proverbs on the tongue, Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 3:8-9; 4:6. Two important suggestions for helping this are (a) Be sensitive to the timing of a conversation and (b) Ask open-ended questions and invite their opinion.

- C. Find Ways to Encourage Your Teens
 - 1. What have you praised or enjoyed with your teen in the past week?
 - 2. What character qualities are you currently praying/thinking about for your teen/s?
 - 3. What plan do you have for them working on it?
 - 4. What does your teen perceive most praiseworthy in your sight?

- D. Interesting Biblical Observations on Teens

“In 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul exhorts Timothy to “flee desires (lusts) of youth.” This calls us to balance how we think about teenagers and the way we define this time of life... There are lusts that particularly plague young people... [To] be strategic, we must ask, ‘What are the evil desires that grip a person during this phase of life?’ Tripp, Age of Opportunity

 - 1. Titus 2:6-10 (Young men)
 - 2. Titus 2:3-5 (Young women)
 - 3. 2 Timothy 2:22 (both)

IV. Seven Helpful Hints from Some Experienced Parents

Dennis and Barbara Rainey, Founders of *Family Life Today* and parents of six. Parenting Today's Adolescent, chapter 3, pp. 27, ff. These are the seven things they most wanted to stress in the rearing of their kids.

- A. Priority 1 – Prayer – praying for them (and with them)
- B. Priority 2 – Standards – establishing standards of acceptable behavior
- C. Priority 3 – Involvement – getting them into opportunities for growth
- D. Priority 4 – Training – actually showing them how to develop mastery
- E. Priority 5 – Community – importance of long term healthy relationships
- F. Priority 6 – Direction – helping them see how God directs them
- G. Priority 7 – Perseverance – not giving up or losing heart but pressing on

V. Training Our Children

- A. Deuteronomy 6:1-9
 - 1. Requirement
 - a. You — Obey His commands
 - b. You — Love God above all else with whole self

 - 2. Rewards
 - a. It may go well with you and your children
 - b. You all may possess all God has promised

 - 3. Reminder — Keep these things on your heart

 - 4. Responsibility
 - a. Pass on the commands of God - formally
 - b. Pass on the ways and stories of God - formally & informally

- B. Psalm 78 (especially vv. 1-9)
1. Listen yourself (vv. 1-3)
 2. We will pass these on to the next generations (vv. 4-6)
Remember God's character, deeds, commands
 3. Positive Goal (v. 7) — Trust God, remember God, obey God
 4. Negative Goal (v. 8-11) — Not be like parents who didn't prepare hearts for personal and family faithfulness
- C. Proverbs 22:6
1. Job — Train up a child in the way (s)he should go
 - a. Set the path appropriate for all children
 - b. According to his/her bent
 2. Result — He won't depart when he is old (*promise or principle?*)
- D. Ephesians 6:4
1. Negative command — Dads, don't come alongside in a way that enrages the child, especially in the way you teach and correct
 2. Positive command — Dads, do train (nourish) your children
 - a. Teach/train/correct/discipline intentionally, purposefully, with a more didactic, daily authority (as you would for a child)
 - b. Draw alongside to correct more gently (as if for an older one)
- E. Obstacles To Overcome Which I've Seen In Me
1. Spiritual complacency (*"not preparing heart"*) Ps. 78:7, Mal. 2:15c
 2. Letting world set my schedule rather than planning it
 3. Trusting others to do it — abdication of assigned responsibility, often due in part to cowardice (*I hate the pain*) and pride (*I am afraid I'll do it poorly and need to lean on others along the way*).

Appendix Two

Signs of Healthy vs. Decaying Family Structure

Reknown Sociologist and Harvard Professor Carle Zimmerman wrote a book in 1947 entitled *Family and Civilization*. In it, he presented the results of his research of 3000 years of great civilizations on five continents. He wanted to know what led to the dissolution of once great societies and cultures, and find out if there were common markers. He concluded his studies with eight things he referred to as “Characteristics of an Atomistic Society” — that is, a society about to self-destruct. Here they are.

1. Marriage loses its sacredness and is frequently broken by divorce.
2. Traditional meaning of marriage ceremony is lost. Alternate forms of marriage arise and individual marriage contracts supplant traditional agreements.
3. Feminist movements abound. Women lose their inclination for child-bearing and child-rearing and birth rates decrease.
4. There is a growing disrespect for parental authority, for parenthood, for authority in general.
5. There is an increase in juvenile delinquency, promiscuity and rebellion.
6. Members of traditional families refuse to accept family responsibilities.
7. There is an increasing desire for and acceptance of adultery.
8. There is a greater tolerance for perversions of all kinds, especially homosexuality, signaling the demise of a culture, according to Zimmerman.

Appendix Three

Signs of a Healthy Family (Real Family Values, Lewis, p. 99)

1. Strong, supportive, honest communication.
2. Large quantities of time spent together.
3. Common faith and practice.
4. Agree on key values.
5. Practice love and mutual appreciation.
6. Common goals and interests.
7. Able to negotiate solutions to crises.
8. Married couples (only) have regular sexual intercourse with one another (only).
9. Make sacrifices for the good of the family. (Philippians 2:3).
10. Members exhibit trust among one another.