

## A Vision for Parenting

This morning we are going to look at a Vision for Parenting. To prompt our heart and to put us in a proper posture to receive what God has for us I want to start with a scripture reading to prompt as we pray over our message today.

**Isaiah 55 (NIV)** - 1 “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

As a parent, are you tired and weary? Is your soul thirsty for God to refresh and nourish you? Will you voice that to Him in prayer right now? (pause and give the congregation the opportunity to do that)

3 Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. 4 See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. 5 Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.”

As a parent, are you willing to yield your heart to God and listen to His instruction? Are you tired of doing it your way and are you ready for something different? Will you voice that God right now in prayer? (pause and give the congregation the opportunity to do that)

6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Will you take a moment and confess your failings this morning and confess that you need His forgiveness and will you yield your ways to His ways in prayer right now? (pause and give the congregation the opportunity to do that)

8 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. 9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Here is God’s promise to you if you will yield to him today?

10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. 12 You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. 13 Instead of the thornbush will grow the

juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever."

Let's **close our prayer time** in praise thanking God for His wisdom and faithfulness and claiming His promises over our families today. Ask Him to help us trust Him and receive what He has for us today through His holy word.

What do you aim for when raising your children? What is your GOAL as a parent? Well here is list of some of the things that come to the top of the list for most parents:

- Want them to do well in school
- Stay away from drugs and alcohol
- Always tell the truth
- Avoid sex until they are married
- Become good citizens
- Get a good job
- Become a great athlete

There is nothing wrong with any of these things. They are all good endeavors to strive for but the real goal we should have as a Christian parent, the one thing we should be aiming for as we raise our children, is to have our children redeemed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and help them see that God is not just someone we add to our lives but He is to be central to our life and purpose. As parents our job is to raise up a generation of children who will love God with all of their heart and who will love others as themselves! In order to do that, our children need to know how much God values their lives especially being image bearers of God.

Welcome to **Week 2** of a series we started last week called **FIGHTING FOR YOUR FAMILY**. Over this series we hope to encourage you and help strengthen your family by taking a look at 6 areas where the FAMILY is under attack. So much of the dysfunction we see in our world today really is a byproduct of the deterioration of the family. Whether it is exhausted mothers overwhelmed by their enormous responsibilities, emotionally and spiritually challenged father's who have become distracted by life, or children growing up in a world without a vision for their lives, our families are really taking a beating and the waves of the culture are shipwrecking our homes. Today, I want us to focus our attention on our children and what it is we are called to as parents. You see, children are extremely valuable!! We see this in Mark Ch. 10 in the way that Jesus responded to the children who were being brought to him.

Now, before we look at this passage it is important for us to acknowledge that raising children is difficult and a great challenge of our patience and in some cases our sanity. Part of that difficulty, if we are not careful, can lead us to think of children more as a nuisance or as insignificant little people that just seem to always be getting in the way of more important things. Not to mention they can be rather draining on our personal finances. Children have always been this way and who among us hasn't at some point in time been having a conversation with another adult and our children keep getting in the way so we tell them to go outside or into another room and play

while we talk about more important matters with our friends. This happens to Jesus here in Mark 10 also, but I want you to notice how He handled it. Leading up to verse 13 Jesus has been engaged in some deep theological discussions with the Pharisees about the lawful practice of divorce (certainly an important adult matter).

In the middle of his discussion and while teaching, people began to bring their children to Jesus so that He might touch them and bless them. The disciples sensing this to be an interruption to more important matters they rebuke the people for bringing the little children to Jesus.

**Mark 10:13-16 (NIV) 13** People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. **14** When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **15** Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." **16** And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

On that day Jesus elevated the status and the value of children and He did so by highlighting the childlike faith that is required for us to have and receive salvation. As we dive into the value of children this morning I want to give you 5 important principles to help guide your vision for parenting so that we will make sure to communicate to our children just how VALUABLE they are to GOD.

### **Principle 1: We must TELL our children how much they are VALUED**

Pastor Chip Ingram says, "There are two questions children are always asking:

- 1) How much do you love me?**
- 2) Where are the boundaries?**

If we value our children we will give them our attention and not just push them to the side as a nuisance. We will also not use them as a way to live out our unfulfilled life through them thus not allowing them to become their own person. (Example; a dad trying to make his son into great athlete or a mom putting pressure on her child to achieve a certain status in order to be successful)

Parents, if you truly love your children, give them your attention by helping them become who God made them to be. Let them know how much they are valued and challenge them to become who God intended them to be! Speak life over them and help them to see their value before God.

Another way we love our children and show them value is by showing them where the boundaries are in life!! We are doing our children a great disservice if we do not show them that in life there are boundaries. If you don't show them boundaries the world will and it will be a hard lesson. We must take time to establish boundaries and clearly communicate what the

boundaries are and why. This will require an investment of time as we listen to them share with us the frustrations they may experience due to these boundaries.

May we value them enough by giving them our undivided attention. Communicating with them and showing them that we care about them. This is what Jesus did when He took time to address the children in His midst. He not only acknowledged them but He intentionally spoke life over them and blessed them.

Is the only time we speak to our children when we are trying to point out what they have done wrong? Do the only times we give our children attention center around when they have disappointed us? Do you spend more time telling them what they need to do and less time listening to them and giving them an opportunity to voice their struggles and their frustrations?

**We must convey to our children how much they are valued and our actions always speak louder than our words!**

### **Principle #2: We must VALUE our children by giving them someone to IMITATE**

Someone to learn from and to show them what they are to value and how they are to live. We will all imitate something. We will all seek to follow someone. Who do you want that to be? Btw, they will emulate those who show them value or who take interest in their lives. As parents we really do have the upper hand in being able to influence our children. But know this, it will be those who love them and value their time and attention!

**1 Corinthians 4:14-17 (NIV)** I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. **15** Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. **16** Therefore I urge you to imitate me. **17** For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Do they see you reading the Bible?  
Do they see you telling the truth?  
Do they see you praying in the midst of a trial?  
Do they see you witnessing to others?  
Do they see you giving to those in need?  
Do they see you making God the center of your life?

If your children were to imitate you, then would you be grateful or embarrassed? Better yet, are you worth imitating? If not will you repent and allow the Lord to restore you?

**We must convey to our children how much they are valued!**

**We must give them someone to imitate!**

### **Principle #3: We must VALUE our children by holding them ACCOUNTABLE to the authorities in their lives**

If they are not respectful of the parental authorities in their lives how will they ever come to respect the authority of God let alone any other authorities in their lives? In fact all authority is God ordained and begins with God.

**Ephesians 6:1-4 (NIV)** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2** “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— **3** “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” **4** Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Boundaries mean very little when we do not hold our children accountable to those boundaries! Btw, you are lying to your children if you do not have boundaries or enforce them. The reason being, the world has boundaries and it will hold them accountable for sure. If we do not enforce boundaries in our home we are setting them up for a difficult life in the real world. Nothing wrong with giving our children an appropriate consequence when they do not respect a boundary. Time outs or taking away things are great tools to use when teaching our kids boundaries. But let's not underestimate spanking as an appropriate consequence when dealing with a rebellious heart. It teaches the value of doing the right thing especially when dealing with how we treat other people. It shows them that there is pain associated in moments when we do not treat others with dignity and respect. Discipline shows that there will be consequences that come with our actions. Just a few parameters when it comes to spanking. It should always be used sparingly and never done in anger. Applied to the bottom and never anywhere else on the body for that is abuse. It should always be measured emotionally and never out of control so as to prevent abuse. When giving out consequences the temperament of the child should be always considered as well. (Tender hearted vs. hard hearted) A stern word or a time-out may be appropriate for the tender hearted child whereas a more involved consequence such as a spanking or being sent to their room is more appropriate for the hard hearted child.

#### **For Accountability to be effective in shaping a child's heart here are 3 important principles we must follow:**

- 1) **Consistency!** Without it we breed frustration for they never really know where the boundaries are.
- 2) **Avoid overcorrection or correction done in anger!** These two, if not kept in check, will always breed frustration and causes hurt and anger on the part of your child
- 3) **Always promote and facilitate reconciliation and an affirmation of your love!** When holding our children accountable we must always see reconciliation as the end goal! We want to shape our children's hearts, not just correct their behavior.

### **Principle #4: We must VALUE our children by making sure we teach them LAW and GRACE**

We should teach our children the LAW: Ten Commandments, Sermon on the Mount, Proverbs, Rules of our House - Principles and Standards. This says that GOD is HOLY and that we should strive to be HOLY.

But the LAW should always come with GRACE because we know that our children inherited their sin nature from us and that the law does nothing to change our hearts. GRACE says you are valuable to God and even though you have sin, God loved you enough to make away for you to be made right with HIM!!

Whether you have a “**Good child**” one who aims to please and be compliant or a “**Prodigal child**” one who always wants to test the boundaries and do his or her own thing, both need grace! The GOOD CHILD needs to know that our good works cannot make us right with God because we are all born in sin! Our goodness is as filthy rags before God and we too need to repent of our sin and receive Jesus by faith. How many children are going to end up in hell because they grew up being a parent pleaser, but never trusted in Jesus?

The PRODIGAL CHILD on the other hand needs to know that our brokenness, no matter how far we have fallen, cannot keep us from God’s love and if we are willing to repent and receive God’s grace applied to our life through faith in Jesus Christ, we too may be saved.

**Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) 8** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast.

In the end it is about our heart and a relationship with Jesus! We don’t want to make Pharisees out of a compliant child who does not think they need grace and we certainly don’t want to make Prodigals who think they cannot return! Both need grace!! Both need salvation!!

**Principle #5: We must VALUE our children by covering them in PRAYER!**

Let’s not overestimate our ability to save our children. You cannot assure your child’s salvation by simply having them pray a prayer or by forcing them to get baptized. We may be able to alter their behavior but we cannot change their heart. Only God can do that! We must cry out to God on their behalf asking Him to extend grace to our children that only He can supply. We don’t have that ability, only God does. We can tell them about Jesus and live like Jesus in front of them. We can love them and guide them, but it is up to God to save them!! Parents, we must pray for God to change our child’s heart and to draw them to Him. We must become intercessors for our child and ask God to do in their lives what He needs to in order to draw them to Him.

**James 5:16 (NIV)** Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. What power there is in the prayer of a godly mother and father.

**1 Timothy 2:1-6 (NIV)** I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— (Our children are included in this list) **2** for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (This should be your goal for how you parent your children - this is the END GAME! That they would live peaceful lives without worry and stress because they trust in GOD and they walk with HIM! Where they walk in godliness and holiness because they have a close relationship with GOD **3** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, **4** who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. and where God will use our children to reach others for the KINGDOM of GOD) **5** For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.

We need to think of our children as arrows that are being sent out into the world for God. To accomplish His purposes and His KINGDOM work. Our job as parents is to sharpen them and prepare them to fly high and go far for His glory.

**Psalms 127 (NIV)** **1** Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. **2** In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves. There are three realms that define our lives. Our HOME, our CITY and our JOBS. If we think that we control the outcomes regarding these three realms and we do not acknowledge God's active involvement in our lives in these three areas we will never experience His true peace.

**3** Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. **4** Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. **5** Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court. As arrows are essential to the success of a warrior in battle, so are children to their father and mother in time of war and litigation. The idea being, the more defenders they have the better it is in their fight against opposition.

Now, let's think of this in terms of the spiritual battle we are waging on earth for the souls of men and regarding the advancement of the Kingdom of God against the kingdom of darkness. It is far better for us to have as many arrows sharp and ready for the battle as possible! Moms and Dads, how sharp are your arrows?

As we close, I want to challenge our parents and grandparents with FOUR Action Steps to take as a result of this message:

- 1) **Does your child/grandchild know how valuable they are?** You don't just tell them how much you love them but you make yourself available to them by removing distractions and giving them your undivided attention. We should do the first without leaving the second one undone. When they want to talk, drop what you're doing and be present and listen. If you have been lousy at this, sit them down, confess your sin and ask them for forgiveness and then start doing it.

- 2) **Sit down and prayerfully make a list of life principles, character traits or core values you would like God to instill in their heart and life before they leave home.** Then, make this a daily prayer where you ask God to use you to help cultivate these values in their lives. As you parent them make these values your focus as this will help you to choose your battles wisely and set priorities for your parenting.
- 3) **Pray for your child's salvation. If they are saved then pray for God to help them continue to grow in their faith.** If you don't know where they are, start having conversations about God and sharing the gospel by reading the Bible together.
- 4) **Evaluate your parenting style.** Do you have defined rules with clear consequences and expectations? Are these clearly communicated and reinforced consistently? Are you focused more on behavior or on your child's heart? Are you very legalistic without extending grace in times of failure? How can you be more balanced in your discipline? How can you do a better job of discipline without anger and frustration?

**Invitation:**

Mom and Dad, where do you stand with Jesus? You can't lead where you have never been!  
Would you receive Jesus today?

Mom and Dad, what example are you setting for your children regarding God? Have you been baptized since you believed? Are you serving God in some way in the church? Do you make weekly worship a priority? Do you pray together as a family? Do you read the Bible together?

Mom and Dad, do you feel like a failure? There is only hope and grace here today! No condemnation and no guilt! Confess, repent, ask for forgiveness and start fresh under God's grace and mercy!! Be set free!!