

## Lesson 4

# Seizing the Power of Example

*Remembering the significance of parental influence and how it impacts the lives of children...*

*Before You Begin:*

### **Read the Following Passages:**

- Proverbs 20.7
- Ephesians 6.4
- Deuteronomy 6.4-7
- Matthew 5.16
- Philippians 4.9
- Colossians 3.21
- 1 Timothy 4.12
- 1 Corinthians 11.1
- Titus 2.7-8
- Psalm 78.4

### **Pray For:**

1. Understanding in seeing the significance of parental example in shaping the lives of your children.
2. For patience and perseverance in demonstrating God's character through your words, actions, and attitudes.
3. To become a better model of forgiveness, grace, and humility.
4. To be more selfless, reflecting God's love and character.
5. A greater sense of dependence on God's wisdom and guidance as we work to understand the power of our example and the influence it has on our children's lives.

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*A righteous person acts with integrity; his children who come after him will be happy, Proverbs 20.7*

Scripture provides us with numerous insights and principles that can guide us in understanding the significance of parental influence and how it impacts the lives of children.

### *The Call to Parental Responsibility*

Parenting is a sacred responsibility entrusted to us by God. Via inspiration of the Spirit, Paul establishes this principle in Ephesians 6.4:

Fathers, don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of

the Lord.

This passage highlights the importance of nurturing and guiding our children in a manner that reflects God's truth. It was Charles Spurgeon who once said, "Train up a child in the way he should go – but be sure you go that way yourself." Our role as parents goes beyond meeting their physical needs; we are called to provide spiritual guidance and instruction, serving as examples of faith and righteousness.

The call for parental responsibility goes all the way back to the establishment of the law with Moses. Deuteronomy 6.4-7 provides us with the foundation for teaching on parental influence:

“Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Parents have a responsibility to teach their children by actively modeling a love for God. They are called to impress God's commandments upon their hearts and consistently engage in conversations about faith and the ways of God in everyday life.

### *Modeling God's Character*

God is our ultimate example, and we are called to reflect His character in our lives. Parents have the opportunity to demonstrate God's love, compassion, forgiveness, and grace through word, action, and attitude. It was Jesus who said:

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven, Matthew 5.16.

When our children witness and experience life with parents living out their faith in integrity, it leaves a lasting impression and helps shape their understanding of God's nature. Paul commanded the Corinthians, *imitate me, as I also imitate Christ*, 1 Corinthians 11.1. Parents today can apply this principle by imitating Christ in their thoughts, words, and actions.

The seriousness of this cannot be under-emphasized. Most likely, your kids will follow Jesus only as much as you follow Jesus. There are obvious exceptions to this, but the principle remains. 2 Kings 14 records the establishment of Amaziah as king over Judah. His father Joash was regarded as a good king, doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord, 2 Kings 12.2. His example obviously impacted his son. It is said of Amaziah:

In the second year of Israel's King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, Amaziah son of Joash became king of Judah. He did what was right in the Lord's sight, but not like his ancestor David. He did everything his father Joash had done, 2 Kings 14.1, 3.

Amaziah followed the example of Joash. He was righteous before the Lord. However, he did not rise to the level of commitment as David had done. He only did as well as his father did. The general rule is that our kids will follow Christ only as much as their parents follow Christ.

Children tend to follow (and are limited by) the example of their parents.<sup>21</sup> In some cases, the spiritual commitment of the next generation tends to be a step lower than the previous. History

reveals how this process continues, until one generation rises up in revival and recommits itself to God. This cycle has repeated itself countless times throughout history.

Certainly we see the importance of modeling God's character. What does this look like day in and day out inside our family life... from the most intimate of settings to how we function within society?

### **In the Home**

As parents consider the areas of life in which they interact with others, we need to begin with the most important and critical area – the example they set within the home and family. How the parents lead here directly impacts the development and well-being of their children. What principles must parents model?

**Love and Respect.** It is the responsibility of parents to model a nurturing and harmonious environment for their children. This begins with a healthy marriage. Husbands and wives need to exhibit love, care, and respect for one another. The amount of disrespect for others that we see today is a direct reflection of the lack of these values being taught or modeled in the home. God desires order, not disorder. As such, he has ordered the family, not based on inferiority or inequality, but by establishing differing roles and levels of authority. This is inherent in the design of the family. *But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ,* 1 Corinthians 11.3.

How this plays out in marriage between husband and wife is outlined in Ephesians 5.22-25 where wives are called to submit to or *respect* the leadership of their husbands and husbands are called upon to *love* their wives. When both marriage partners bend their will to God's, where the husband fulfills his role in caring for and nourishing his wife, she naturally and happily responds to his leadership. All of this demonstrates respect and love for God.

**Sacrificial love.** Again, this is most readily seen in the parents' commitment to their marriage. The ultimate model of sacrificial love is found in Jesus Christ Himself.

Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children, and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God, Ephesians 5.1-2.

Parents have been called to emulate Christ's sacrificial love by willingly giving themselves up for the well-being and flourishing of their family members. This is seen through *selflessness* and *putting others first*. Sacrificial love in the context of parenting involves prioritizing the needs of our children and spouse above our own. Philippians 2:3-4 encourages us

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

This requires setting aside personal desires and preferences to serve and care for the physical,

emotional, and spiritual needs of our family members. How committed are you in giving your spouse and kids the time and attention they need? Do you actively engage with your children, listening attentively, and being present in their lives? This includes quality time spent together, participating in activities, and creating a nurturing environment for growth and development. Sacrificial love involves the responsibility of *nurturing* and *disciplining your children* in their faith and character. This is demonstrated by providing guidance, imparting wisdom, and teaching your children the ways of God. This includes modeling godly values and principles, sharing biblical truths, and praying for and with your children.

Finally, sacrificial love is demonstrated by *the practice of forgiveness and grace* within the family. Ephesians 4:32 reminds us:

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Parents demonstrate sacrificial love by practicing forgiveness, offering grace, and fostering an atmosphere of love and acceptance. This includes acknowledging mistakes, seeking reconciliation, and showing unconditional love even in difficult situations.

**Hard Work.** *Idle hands make one poor, but diligent hands bring riches*, Proverbs 10.4. Scripture continually encourages diligence and hard work as a virtue. Parents are called to exemplify diligence in their work and responsibilities, teaching their children the importance of diligence as a key aspect of life. This includes *faithfulness in responsibilities*.

Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ,  
Colossians 3.23-24.

By diligently carrying out their work and responsibilities, parents can teach their children the significance of taking ownership and giving the best in everything they do. This is what it means to *model perseverance*. Hard work often involves facing challenges and persevering through difficult times. Parents can model perseverance to their children by not giving up in the face of obstacles, demonstrating resilience, and showing how perseverance leads to growth and success.

When parents set the example by working hard, they also teach the importance of integrity and excellence.

And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him, Colossians 3.17.

Your kids need to see what it means to do your best, pursue excellence, and honor God through work. By demonstrating integrity and a commitment to quality, parents inspire their children to adopt these values in their own endeavors.

## In the Church

**Being active in the local church.** Parents need to set the example by being *an active member of a local congregation*. How much importance does your family give to the local church? Are you actively involved with the other members in their spiritual pursuits? Christianity was not designed to be only an individual quest. Parents must understand the importance of other church members in their own spiritual growth... as well as their kids.

From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part,  
Ephesians 4.16.

Church involvement is not just the responsibility of those in leadership – it is intended for everyone.

**Attending church.** Going along with this is parental commitment to *being present at church worship services, bible studies, and other gatherings*. This is where we each fulfill the expectation of the Hebrew writer:

And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching, Hebrews 10.24-25.

It certainly feels that times have changed. More than any previous period of my lifetime, I observe members of the church who feel worship and bible studies other than the Sunday morning services are *optional*. Gospel meetings, midweek services, youth events and conferences, and other activities have lessened in importance and fallen down the priority list as work, hobbies, vacations, school events, and extracurricular activities such as sports and band, and other community events often take precedence. Consistency matters. We not only have to tell our children church is important, we need to demonstrate it by being present at every opportunity. What is the priority in your family? God comes first, Matthew 6.33.

**Speaking favorably of the church.** As you leave the Sunday morning service and are in your car heading for lunch, typically the conversation will be about that morning's experience. What are you saying in front of your children? Is there criticism of the teachers or preacher? Is a personal problem with a member and your poor interaction with that person a topic of conversation? Is there an issue you have with the elders being talked about openly? Are you openly voicing your disagreement with where you think the congregation is headed? *Your children are listening*. Impressions are being made. As they enter middle school and high school age these kinds of conversations can have great impact on a young person's decision to stay in the church when they get out on their own.

The Holy Spirit's instruction on this matter is clear:

Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but if there is any good word for edification according to the need of the moment, say that, so that it will give grace to those who hear,  
Ephesians 4.29 NASB.

Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person, Colossians 4.5-6.

With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness. Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way, James 3.9-10.

Always speak in a loving way about your brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter how much you disagree with them. It was famed NFL football coach Vince Lombardi who once said, "Praise in public; criticize in private." And of course, criticism of another Christian should be conducted directly with that person, not hashed and rehashed among family... and especially our children.

### In Our Community

In Matthew 22.39 Jesus repeated the second great commandment: *love your neighbor as yourself*. As Christians we expected to let our light shine, glorifying God by our good works, Matthew 5.15-16. One of the best ways to do this is by **being a good neighbor** in our community, be it inside or outside of the church.

Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith, Galatians 6.9-10.

When the opportunities come, we need to take advantage of them so that others get a taste of the love of Christ. This can be demonstrated in many ways. A meal prepared, yard mowed, errand run, spending time with others, helping in community organizations, the list can go on and on. Our children need to see us actively involved in the life of others.

Finally, our children need to see us **respecting our leaders and the laws they pass**. The Bible teaches the importance of honoring and respecting those in positions of authority. Romans 13:1 states, *Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God*. Parents can model respect for community leaders and the laws of the land by teaching their children to value and obey authority, recognizing that it is part of God's design for society. Parents should educate their children about the importance of being responsible citizens. Titus 3:1 reminds believers, *Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work*. Parents can instill in their children a sense of civic duty by actively participating in their community, following laws, voting responsibly, and engaging in volunteer work that benefits others. This teaches children the value of contributing positively to society.

authority. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 advises, *First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and* Parents should teach their children the importance of praying for community leaders and those in



*thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.* Parents can lead by example, regularly praying for leaders and demonstrating a heart of compassion and understanding.

*Practical Applications:*

- 1. Prioritize sacrificial love:** Make a conscious effort to prioritize the well-being and needs of your family members above your own.
- 2. Allocate quality time:** Carve out intentional time to spend with your children and spouse, creating opportunities for connection, growth, and nurturing relationships.
- 3. Disciple and teach:** Actively engage in nurturing your children's faith and character development through teaching biblical principles, modeling godly values, and praying for and with them.
- 4. Cultivate forgiveness and grace:** Foster an environment of forgiveness and grace within your family, modeling Christ's example of unconditional love and offering forgiveness when conflicts arise.
- 5. Seek guidance from Scripture and prayer:** Continually seek wisdom and strength from God's Word and through prayer as you navigate the challenges and joys of sacrificial love within your family.

*For Discussion:*

1. How does Proverbs 20:7 connect the righteousness of a parent with the happiness of their children? Why is it important to act with integrity as parents?
2. What does Ephesians 6:4 teach us about the responsibility of parents? How does this verse guide our approach to parenting?
3. In Deuteronomy 6:4-7, what instructions does God give to parents regarding teaching their children? How can parents practically apply these instructions in their everyday lives?

4. How can parents model God's character in their interactions with their children and within the family? What are some specific ways to reflect God's love, compassion, forgiveness, and grace?
5. Discuss the significance of sacrificial love in parenting. How can parents prioritize sacrificial love in their relationships with their spouse and children? What impact does sacrificial love have on the family dynamics?
6. According to Proverbs 10:4, why is hard work important? How can parents model diligence and perseverance to their children?
7. How can parents demonstrate integrity and excellence in their work and responsibilities? Why is it important to instill these values in children?
8. Discuss the importance of parents being active in the local church and attending church services. How does church involvement and participation impact children's perception of faith and community?
9. How can parents speak favorably of the church and church members? Why is it important to avoid criticism and negativity in front of children? How can parents navigate disagreements or concerns constructively?
10. In what ways can parents be good neighbors and actively involved in their community?



How does being a positive influence in the community reflect the love of Christ to others?

11. Discuss the importance of respecting community leaders and the laws of the land. How can parents teach their children to value and obey authority while maintaining a godly perspective?

12. Why is prayer for leaders and authorities essential? How can parents lead by example in praying for community leaders and demonstrating compassion and understanding?

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<sup>21</sup> Maxon, David. "A Parent's Example." *Daily Devotions*. In his article, Maxon points out two great exceptions to the rule. Ahaz was a wicked king. His son Hezekiah was one of the best kings of Judah (2 Kings 16.1-4; 18.1-3). His grandson Josiah is also an exception as he was righteous before the Lord despite his father Manasseh being one of the worst kings Judah ever had.