

VIII. Parenting in Biblical Perspective
Biblical Parenting Illustrated in the Lives of Joseph and Mary
“The Four-Fold Paradigm of Parental Practice—#2: Stature”

Luke 2

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We will be in Luke 2 and we'll be following through on this study of the four-fold paradigm of the objective of parenting to grow our children in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man. I'd like to give you a couple of thoughts as we come to this. We live in a culture amazingly that is utterly committed to the destruction of the next generation. In my lifetime since 1973 we have destroyed 1.5 million lives every year under the legalization of the assault of the unborn. I certainly understand the challenges of “unwanted” pregnancies and the challenges of abandoned women but the answer is never the death of a child. The child should be under no death sentence.

As the culture is doing that it struck me one day, if the culture is bent on the destruction of their children would not one of the most practical, strategic things we could ever do is to have covenant children and to be fruitful and multiply, but not just have them or engage in biological reproduction but to have them in the context of a family that is growing in grace. If sin has broken it apart, seeking the remedies of sin to that family but then raising these children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and raising these children for the Lord, making use of the promise of the Lord when He says “I'll be a God to you and to your children after you.” What would happen as the world depopulates, if we populate it? What would happen if we raise our children in and for Christ?

I have shown you the surveys that show many of the children in the present generation are leaving the homes and departing from the church even when they claim to be spiritual and they don't return to the church but I think that is for a couple of reasons. Number one, it's because we as parents have not properly honored the Lord's church and the raising of our children and embedded ourselves within it therefore our children observed that church was just a drive-by situation anyway and so why bother to drive by when they have the time to make their decisions. I think another problem is we have had a generation where we have raised our children for our personal fulfillment to cleave to us instead of raising them to leave us. Our objective should be that our children can leave us and cleave to another with a marriage that is in the Lord and then raise their family in the Lord which means we need to have an objective of evangelizing our children and then discipling our children.

What does this mentoring of our children look like? Luke who accompanied the Apostle Paul writes down about the ministry of Jesus and I think he got this Luke 2 information from Mary herself when he compiled most of the information for the Gospel of Luke while they were in Ephesus for three years where Jesus' mother would have probably been accessible under the care of the Apostle John. That's why it keeps saying in Luke 2 that Mary pondered or treasured these things in her heart. How would you know if somebody pondered or treasured things? I know Luke is inspired by the Holy Spirit but I think Mary is telling Luke that this is something that she would think about and treasure up.

Then for her to mark out the raising of Jesus from adolescence to manhood with two basic statements that you see in Luke 2. Luke 2:39 is the declaration of what was being done in the raising of Jesus from infancy to adolescence. Luke 2:39-40 says [39] *And when they had*

performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. [40] And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

Here you have parents that know God's Word and are embedded in the assembly of God's people, the Old Testament church of temple and synagogue and they do so at Jerusalem and when they return to Galilee to their town of Nazareth. We see the results of their parenting in Luke 2:40. Then we have this account of Jesus at the temple and He is drawing wisdom from the teachers there by asking questions and listening to them. Then He responds to their questions which surprises them by His wisdom. They leave Jerusalem and go home and Scripture says He was submissive to His parents. What is the result? Luke 2:52 says [52] *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.* Built upon all that we have covered in the previous seven studies we have now come to this fourfold paradigm.

The first thing we covered in this fourfold paradigm is that Jesus grew in wisdom and this goes along with our study of the book of James. Wisdom from above is that which was given to Him, who was Wisdom and come from above but in His humanity He was born with the need to learn wisdom. So He grew in wisdom in His full humanity. It is wisdom that is foundational to the next three things. Wisdom leads to growing in stature, in favor with God and in favor with men.

Now we come to the second part of this fourfold paradigm of Biblical parenting as an objective and it is the matter of growing in stature. Someone asked me if I had much to say on this matter of growing in stature and I have a lot to say on this but I will only give you a little bit that I think is helpful. Here is why. In the last study I made a comment that the primary and ultimate responsibility for the teaching of our children rests with parents but any parent that does not cease God-gifted, given and called teachers to assist them is a parent that I think in some sense guilty of child abuse. All the gifts to raise your children with wisdom do not reside in you.

Now I am not a member of the National Association of Educators that tells you as a parent you can't educate your child, on the contrary, women as mothers do the most amazing educational feat every single day it happens where a mother who has never been taught one thing about education teaches their child a foreign language with no point of reference. When I learned Greek, Hebrew, a little bit a Latin and Spanish, I had a vocabulary card that had the English word and the other language word and the same with grammar so I had this point of reference. When you have a baby it's not born with an English gene so the mother will teach that child the language of that family with no point of reference, no vocabulary cards. It's an amazing thing that takes place.

What your child needs to know about life and humanity and to know about what it means to be a Christian isn't deposited solely in you so you need to be like Mary and Joseph. Listen to the teachers like Jesus as He drew upon the teachers in the synagogue and the temple. Having said that, you have to choose teachers for your children carefully, in the church and in their education. When we talk about education and growing in wisdom we automatically think of schools that have classrooms. When the Bible talks about schooling and education it doesn't talk about classrooms it talks about teachers. The classroom can end up anywhere, by a roadside, in a house but the key was the teacher. So you want to choose your teachers well.

I need to give some caveats here because I don't want people to misrepresent me. I think we are greatly blessed where we live in this city. I believe God has been doing a simmering, a bubbling up yet not a grand sweeping revival since the 1960s of amazing things in our city and it overflows into our schools. We have so many Christians who are administrators, teachers and

counselors in our schools and I'm fully aware of that. I want to say again that the Bible doesn't tell you as a parent what system of teachers you are to call upon so you have freedom to look at private schools, public schools, home schools or a home school co-op. That is between you and the Lord but I just want you to know you're responsible for the teachers you choose.

The other day I was invited to go to a history class at the high school to talk about the church history in a history class. What other cities would ask me to do that? As I talked about the church in that class I also talked about Jesus in that class as well. I am overwhelmed at the Christian school administrators and teachers in this city but it is embedded in a system that is decided curriculum textbook wise opposed to Christianity. Some of our teachers and administrators overcome that but in the actual textbooks it's embedded against that.

One of the places it is very obvious is what they teach about the physical and spiritual and the relationship of the two. Whenever you abandon Christianity you will eventually devolve into paganism and paganism has one thought. I commend to you the writings of Dr. Francis Schaeffer in this area especially The God Who is not Silent as he brings this pagan platonic view of life out where the physical is considered evil and the spiritual is considered good. The whole point of salvation is to escape the physical because the physical is evil. That's why cultures that have this religion of despair burn bodies when they die so that you can't get back in that evil body and so that body is done away with. It is a religion of despair that shows up in their view of life. So evil is the flesh, the body itself is evil in this view.

The only problem is that as a Christian you know that's not true. When God made the body of Adam and Eve He said it was good. It's not evil. What about the curse of sin? Absolutely, sin cursed the body and sin cursed the soul and that's why you're born spiritually dead but it wasn't created evil. God's work of redemption is both soul and body. You are born again spiritually and one day you'll be raised and translated into that glorious body for all eternity.

So our kids grow up with this basic view of life in which the physical is what's evil, the spiritual is what's good and therefore the spiritual, however you want to define it or religion you want to adopt, is escaped from the physical thus as it has infiltrated Christianity leads to why you have people going off into communes and flagellating themselves to punish their evil body. If you want to see this in its fullness just watch an Islamic celebration such as Ramadan where they will go and beat their body with the parade because the body is evil. How do we view this? How do we teach our children about their bodies?

What would Biblical wisdom say about stature, raising our children physically? I want to give you five things in terms of this matter of stature. In the last study we said wisdom is the ability to live with true knowledge permeated by understanding, manifested in the crucible of life which itself is necessary to gain knowledge, understanding and wisdom. So we are leading our children with life experiences to learn about life. The Word of God is framing their thoughts and decisions and they are learning them in the context of life. As your children grow you increasingly turn over decisions to them so that they are learning to make decisions. Good decisions will produce good results. Bad decisions will produce bad results. One of those things is to teach them with wisdom about their bodies, about how you grow in stature.

Here are five takeaways in terms of growing in stature. The first one is we must teach our children the right view of the body, soul and spirit. Let's look at Genesis 2. So we are looking at Biblical wisdom and the body, how we teach our children about the physical and the spiritual. We are going to look at the book of origins, the origin of the body and the soul or spirit. Before I get there I'm fully aware that some of you were raised in the context that the

human being is made up of three parts – body, soul and spirit. That’s not heresy but I do think it leads to some error. I am not a trichotomist but I am a dichotomist. In other words, I believe there is the physical and the spiritual and the spiritual has multiple terms to describe it in the Bible. It can be referred to as spirit, soul, mind and heart. It’s even called bowels. So that spiritual dynamic of your life has many terms to look at its multi-faceted nature but I believe that we are made up of two parts – a physical part and a spiritual part.

How did they come into existence? Genesis 2:5-7 says [5] *When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, [6] and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—[7] then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath (soul, spirit) of life, and the man became a living creature.* It’s a tough translation. The man becomes a living soul at that point. Here is God creating all that He creates by speaking and it comes into existence but not man. He doesn’t speak in the special creation of man. He forms the man from the dust of the ground.

I remember reading the Reader’s Digest account of the little boy who came to his mother one day and said “Mother, where did we come from?” She said “Adam.” He said “Where did Adam come from?” She said “The dust of the ground.” He said “Then what happens when we die?” She said “You go back to dust.” He said “Mom, I was looking under your bed and we either have one coming or going.” God takes the dust of the ground and forms the man but up to that point all you have is a corpse. Then with careful use of the language He breathes into the corpse through the nostrils the breath, the spirit of life. The body comes in the image of your parents. Your soul, spirit is what declares you in the image of God who is Spirit and has no bodily parts.

Does the Bible say the eye of the Lord? The Lord doesn’t have a 700 pound eye rolling around. That is what we call anthropomorphism – a part of a man or woman’s body that is used to describe an activity of God because that’s the way we think. When we think of God seeing we think of eyes. When we think of God’s strength we think of a right arm. He doesn’t have a right arm for God is a Spirit, until Jesus comes and takes upon Himself a true body. So God now puts life in His image, imprinted upon man who is a corpse and when that breath enters into that body and the two are together he then becomes a living being.

So unlike the pagan view – here’s your body that is kind of like a car and here is your spirit which is in the car and your spirit is the passenger in the car. Therefore death is just opening the door for the passenger to get out. That may sound very comforting but that is pure paganism. In a Biblical view of physical and spiritual the spiritual is not a passenger in the bodily car. Think more like this. Your spirit is one thread, your body is another thread and the physical and spiritual are interdependent and interwoven.

When we came together for worship how were we to worship? Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is *within me*, bless His holy Name but here is the fact. If you stayed up on Saturday night to watch late night TV like Saturday Night Live when you got to church it was Sunday Morning dead. Your physical lack of physical rest will affect your spiritually. Now God overcomes it from time to time. Have you ever noticed when God grants you the fruit of the Spirit even leading to self-control of the physical body and its appetites, how that enhances the spiritual and how your spiritual growth enhances self-control? The two are interdependent upon one another. They are related to each other. That is why death is so horrendous. Let’s look at James 2.

In James 2 it talks about how saving faith and Godly wisdom are interdependent and inseparable and where there is true faith there will be Godly works growing by grace. He then makes a comparison. James 2:26 says [26] *For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.* He is saying the body is dead if the spirit is removed from it so Jesus gave up His Spirit. He said “To Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” That is why I cannot pray for you to have a natural death because death is not natural. It is the rendering apart what was made to be together and God in His redeeming work will put both together for all eternity because when your soul goes to be with Him in the intermediate state one day He will raise that body and body and soul fitted for eternity will be joined together. That’s why when we go to a grave side we are there with honor and respect, not because the person is there for the soul is with the Lord in that intermediate state but God is not through yet for He is going to raise that body and unite for a final state of a body prepared for a new heavens and a new earth. That is why death is so unnatural.

It is not like I have this car that my spirit is in and when I die they just open the door and let it out. It is not natural at all and that is why death is called an enemy. Why is it that when believers are about to be with the Lord they fight for life? They were made to live. Life is the spirit that is joined with the body. Death is something that has been overcome but it is not embraced. It is the wages of sin, not creation. It is not here’s my body and the perforated soul attached to it and when I die it’s just undoing the perforation. No it is a rendering, a setting a part of something so what have you just picked up from this? What happens to you physically affects you spiritually. What happens to you spiritually will affect you physically. They are not disjointed. It is two threads woven into the tapestry of one cloth.

Here is the second takeaway. The physical and the spiritual (body and soul) have an interdependent relationship. I want to show you this in Matthew 26. If we physically do not get the rest we ought to have it will affect us spiritually. It will affect our worship that is supposed to be done in spirit and truth. That is why part of preparation for Lord’s Day worship should not only be the reading of Scripture with your family but it should also be getting to bed on time so that I’m ready to worship because my physical life affects my spiritual and my spiritual affects my physical. In Matthew 26 we are in the last week of Jesus’ life and Jesus goes apart for a prayer time. It’s a wonderful place to actually stand at this place where this took place in history, on the side of the Mount of Olives in the garden called Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:36-46 says [36] *Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.”* [37] *And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.* [38] *Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”* [39] *And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”* [40] *And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour?”* [41] *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* [42] *Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”* [43] *And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.* [44] *So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.* [45] *Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. [46] Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”*

I want to give you a couple of thoughts here. This text doesn't record what the other Gospels do. Here when Jesus prayed His soul was heavy. The other Gospels record something else. The heaviness and the weight of all that He was facing not only sent Him to prayer but the intensity of the prayer actually burst the capillaries of His body and He began to sweat drops of blood. What His soul was bearing showed up in the bursting of capillaries in His body – the physical and the Spiritual. Each time He comes back to the disciples they have gone to sleep while Jesus is praying. Notice the thoughtful, gentle, insightful words of Jesus, pastoral but insightful. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Here is another example of the two. He says to them "I know in your heart, soul and spirit you want to pray with Me in this hour but you are not used to it. Your body isn't ready for it. What your soul is ready to do your body has not been trained to do. Therefore you cannot do it." The two are related. If I want to have protracted prayer spiritually, I need to have a body that is used to it and prepared for it. The two are interrelated to each other.

Here is the third takeaway. How do we view the body? As we grow in stature how do we teach your children when they become a Christian to view their body? Let's look at I Corinthians 3 in which the church is described as a building, a field and then it's described as a temple. I Corinthians 3:16-17 says *[16] Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? [17] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* You are thinking that I'm about ready to tell you that the Christian's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. I am but it's not from this text.

Now I'd like to show you this text from the Southern American Standard Bible. I Corinthians 3:16-17 says *[16] Do you not know that you (ya'll – all ya'll) are God's temple (singular) and that God's Spirit dwells in you (ya'll)? [17] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you (ya'll) are that temple.* In other words, the gathered church is a temple of the Holy Spirit. The local church gathered is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Now go with me to I Corinthians 6. By the way, this is repeated to some degree in II Corinthians 6.

In I Corinthians 6 we are being told to be careful of how we engage in sexual relationships and that they belong only in marriage. We are to be careful in using our bodies sexually, only within marriage and never outside of marriage. I won't go through all of that but I do want to get to the point that he makes in I Corinthians 6:18-20 which says *[18] Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. [19] Or do you not know that your (the individual Christian) body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

In the previous text he said that ya'll are the temple and if he was talking about the individual Christian he would have had to say ya'll are temples, plural but he says ya'll are a temple, singular, meaning all ya'll are a temple. He is referring to the local church gathered in that text. Here in I Corinthians 6 he says you, the individual Christian, your personal body is the personal dwelling place, Shekinah glory of God, you are His holy of holies, He is dwelling in you. You have been bought with a price. How can a Holy God dwell in a sinner man's body? It is because I have been redeemed, justified and set apart by the work of Christ. I have been purchased with a price. Now He is in my body. He dwells within me. He is leading me, empowering me, I don't want to grieve Him, I want to welcome Him, I don't want to quench Him, I want to surrender to Him, and I want Him to do this so that I can glorify God with this body.

He builds on it again in another text in Romans 12. Romans is the unfolding of the glorious Gospel for eleven chapters and when you get to the end of Romans 11 you see this doxology after developing the Gospel. Romans 11:33-36 says [33] *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* [34] *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”* [35] *“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”* [36] *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* He ends this glorious Gospel exposition with a doxology of praise but he doesn't end the letter.

Romans 12:1-2 says [1] *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, (not for God's mercy for that has already been given to you) to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* [2] *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* This is Paul again stating that you are holy before God. Mercy and grace has purchased you through the blood of Jesus Christ. He indwells you. Now what should you do? Your life is worship. Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

In the Old Testament you killed bodies. The blood was shed from bodies of bulls and goats. Now you come to the New Testament and the Lamb of God has saved us by His grace. Now what do we who are saved do? We deny ourselves and sacrifice ourselves that we live unto the praise and glory of God. That's our reasonable service of worship to the Lord. That is the reason He saved us. Our lives, lived in this body, are presented – notice that worship language. The way we know how to do that is by the renewal of our minds with the Word of God so that wisdom leads us in the decisions of how my body will be used to glorify the One true and living God. That means I want this body under control.

Let's look at I Corinthians 9:24-27 which says [24] *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.* [25] *Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.* [26] *So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.* [27] *But I **discipline my body and keep it under control**, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified* (the word of judgment).

He says I bring my body under control. Some translations say 'I buffet my body' and some take that to give license to the Golden Corral Restaurant to buffet your body but that's not what it is saying. It says I discipline my body. Why? It is because my body has a job to do. I'm a saved man. The Holy Spirit is within me. My body is used to worship the Lord from a renewed mind and an overflowing heart. I need to teach my children that about their body.

The fourth takeaway is the caring of the body. Let's look at I Timothy 4. This is Paul telling Timothy how to be a pastor at Ephesus. I Timothy 4:6-9 says [6] *If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.* [7] *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train (discipline) yourself for godliness;* [8] *for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.* [9] *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.*

He is saying we are to make primary the growing in the spiritual disciplines. You want to pursue godliness. Train your spiritual life to godliness. It is of great value. Bodily discipline is of some value. He didn't say bodily discipline was of no value. Your body is under discipline so that it is ready to live out your spiritual disciplines. When you primarily focus on the spiritual

disciplines, appropriately have a physically disciplined life, in concert with it, now all of that holds promise for the life to come and the life now that you're living in that body. So believers ought to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control so that the body is brought under the discipline of the Lord's grace and mercy. Because of my spiritual growth bodily discipline is taking place. My primary discipline is godliness and then my physical disciplines are positioning me about that godliness and that godliness is empowering me for my physical disciplines. This is of some value. Don't put it ahead of the spiritual disciplines but put it alongside so that the two work interdependently together.

Fifthly, what about the appetites of the body in the Christian life? Let's look at I Corinthians 10:31 which says [31] *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* This body was made with God given appetites to be God-directed satisfied, to be God-directed enjoyed to the praise and glory of God. Eating is a blessing. Drinking is a blessing. Sex is a blessing. Work is a blessing. Recreation, exercise, play are all blessings. Never let any of those become the idol. If food becomes an idol then it's gluttony. If drink becomes an idol then it's drunkenness. If work becomes an idol then it's the work-aholic whose life is work. If rest becomes an idol then laziness becomes the way of life. Granted in all of the appetites the key word is Biblical restraint in Biblical guidelines with Holy Spirit moderation.

We are temperate people. None of our appetites control us. Sex is for one man, one woman within marriage. Heterosexual immorality is a sin. Homosexuality is a sin. Mono-sexuality is a sin. All of those are sins and have an impact in your life. I'm not doing this to be saved but because I'm saved, in light of God's mercy and the physical disciplines of life, then Lord, bring discipline into my life so that I don't live to eat. I eat to live for Christ. I don't live to drink. I drink to live for Christ. I don't live for sex. Sex is within marriage and it's holy and undefiled in the marriage bed, to be enjoyed to the glory of God in the ministry to one another.

I work to declare the dignity and reflect God who created six days. I rest to declare how God has made me in His image. He rested. I rested. I arrange my life so that my vocational work and my family work are done six days a week and the seventh day is a day of rest and worship. I bring that discipline in my life and God tells us. For instance when I learn the rhythm of work six and rest on the seventh I use it to worship the Lord and then He says you'll ride the heights of the earth. If you neglect it, it will send you to the grave much, much quicker.

All of these disciplines are to be enjoyed, not for grace but by grace and the disciplines are applied to all the appetites of life so that whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, we do all for the glory of God. That is what Biblical wisdom allows you to teach your children. Son, daughter, you're made in the image of God with a soul and I'm sorry but you're body came in our image so you have to put up with that but you're made in the image of God and those two things are fastened together. When God saves you, you are born again and He is going to give you a new body for the new heavens and the new earth. Until then He will give you the grace to use this body to worship Him because He is going to indwell it. Then He will give you the grace to discipline that body so that everything you do in it increasingly can be to His glory. Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, present yourself as a living, worship sacrifice. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. We pray that You would receive our thanks for all of Your good gifts and Your redeeming work. Thank You for wisdom that helps us grow in stature, the wisdom from above. Now Father, lead us to that wisdom in

how it affects us in our relationship with You and with one another. Guide us that we might guide our children in the way of the Lord for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.