

IX. Parenting in Biblical Perspective  
Biblical Parenting Illustrated in the Lives of Joseph and Mary  
“The Four-Fold Paradigm of Parental Practice—#3: Favor with God”  
Luke 2  
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March 30, 2014 – Evening Sermon

We have been using the life of Joseph and Mary illustratively to guide us in some principles of Biblical parenting. We are focused on a four-fold paradigm practice objective that can be seen here in Luke 2. Luke 2:39-40 marks out our Lord's progress from infancy to adolescence, which 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 (Jesus) grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.* Now we see Him moving from adolescence to manhood summation in Luke 2:52 which says [52] *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.* We have identified these words as a four-fold guide in our parenting. This is our ninth study so there are number of texts that stand behind this that we'll look at in this study.

Before we look at the third part in this four-fold paradigm I would like to first look at these fifteen words in Luke 2:52. If you think about these words for a moment they present somewhat of a problem for us. Here's the problem. How do you see Jesus growing in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man? In Christ is all wisdom so how can this text be telling us He is growing in wisdom if in fact He is the source of all wisdom, the personification of all wisdom and the focus of all wisdom? The text is telling us that because in Jesus as He comes into this world is the dynamic that Christ is in One Person two complete natures. They are not confused nor are they in competition but they are really in existence. He is one hundred percent God and He is one hundred percent man.

As a man Jesus did not come out of the womb with all the axioms of algebra in His head or knowing how to handle siblings who are trying to give you trouble. As in His humanity He had to grow in wisdom. Jesus had to grow in stature as His human body developed from that embryonic form, Holy Spirit engaged, in the womb of Mary participating fully in the birth of a body that bears all of the weaknesses of man born into this sinful world. He had no sin nature but He did have a body that could be impacted by the results of sin in this world. He would get sick, sweat, tired and all those true bodily dynamics. So He not only had to grow in wisdom but He had to grow in stature. In this study we'll look at how He grew in favor with God and in the next study we'll look at how He grew in favor with man.

Now, of our difficulties in understanding these four elements in the life of Jesus (100% God and 100% man), there is none more difficult than the third one – favor with God. The word favor is related to the whole understanding of grace and blessing. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord that God's favor is upon us. It's a word directly related to God's covenant mercies and gracious kindnesses. Here is Jesus born into this world and it is stated that God's favor is upon Him and He is growing in that favor. What does that mean for Him to grow in favor with God? What does that mean that He grew in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man? How are we to understand that?

That is what we'll look at in this study because it was an objective of Mary and Joseph. Here they have the Son of God and the Son of Man in One Person. As God He certainly doesn't need to grow in favor with God because He is God but as Jesus in His humanity He would grow

in favor with God. I would like to lay out for you five elements of that but there are a couple of other things I want to mention about this four-fold paradigm before we dive into it.

I want to refer back to the statement that Jesus grew in wisdom. This means that Jesus grew in His understanding, development and His use of truth in life. Wisdom is knowledge that comes to understanding that is lived out in life. We live wise lives. Wisdom is not being an answer man. There are a lot of people who are unbelievably brilliant who in life are just dumb. They don't have wisdom. We tend to call this common sense in the secular definition but in the sanctified sense of it, it is wisdom. How do I put together the great truths of God is transcendent, God is eminent? One is the intimacy and eminence of God and then the transcendence of God. How do you deal with law and Gospel? How do you deal with truth and love? How do you marry those things in life with wisdom? How do you know how to respond to people who may have the same problem with different perspectives to that problem? So Jesus grew in wisdom, in His humanity. It's what we call a Biblical world and life view downloaded into a Biblical world and life style.

Secondly, there is stature. How is it that we occupy and use these bodies that are inseparably united to our spirit as instruments to the glory of God? What happens to me spiritually affects me physically and what happens to me physically affects me spiritually. The Apostle Paul says "I buffet my body making it my servant, my slave." How is my body always prepared and ready? How is it that we get the knowledge of rejoicing six days and resting on the Sabbath? How do we build Sabbath weeks into our year? We call them vacations. How do we embrace in vocation of living life and exercise of these bodies in life? We grow physically or in stature. In this study we'll look at how we grow spiritually. In the next study we'll look at how we grow relationally, the disciplines of relationships.

How do we grow spiritually? We call these the disciplines of grace. I highly commend to you Donald Whitney's book Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life on the disciplines of grace. It is very well done. It's where you don't look at the disciplines in a mechanistic way where if you had your quiet time then God will bless you or a legalistic way but you look at it in terms of how God designed the reading, the reflecting, the meditating, singing of His Word, the praying with His Word and how God uses worship in your life. These are the spiritual disciplines in your life.

With Mary and Joseph you can see it by their engagement in the temple, by their regular engagement in the synagogue for they knew how to surround their children with the disciplines of grace. They knew how to create that environment around them. When you put those disciplines of grace into practice such as family prayer, family worship, the reading of Scripture, the study of Scripture, the memorization of Scripture, the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and fellowship, what do they look like? I will address this further and take a whole study to address family worship after the next few studies. The key moment in the life of any church which is the family of God, is worship. I believe the key moment in the life of any family that loves God in Christ and for Christ is family worship. How do we bring those disciplines of grace into those moments on a daily basis as the family gathers together around God's Word?

One of the ways that family worship is enhanced is by priority, joy and persistence the discipline of creating those spiritual disciplines within the family comes by exposing and engaging my family in the disciplines of grace within the family of God, His church. We learn how to study the Word of God and how to devotionally read the Word of God. We learn how to pray before the Lord. We are taught and disciplined how to pray. So the gathering together of the large group, God's people in worship, and the commitment of ourselves into a small group to be

developed with more intimacy and accountability to learn the disciplines of grace, can then be downloaded into the life of our family as fathers and mothers engage in that enterprise.

I'd like to look at two texts. First let's look at Ephesians 6:1-4 which says [1] *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* [2] *"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise),* [3] *"that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."* (The instruction of a father is to be joined with the kind teaching of a mother according to the book of Proverbs.) [4] *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger (this is done because of a lack of engagement or inconsistency in the lives of your children), but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Father, you create this Christ-centered environment in order to usher your children into that which is crucial in their life, their relationship with the Lord. Fathers, what you do, your priorities, are going to show up in the life of your children. This will be kind of a negative illustration but I think it will help. When I was younger and they openly sold cigarettes but they were trying to get people to stop, one of the commercials they showed really struck me and I'll never forget it. It had a father sitting beside a tree and he had been playing ball with his son. His son sat down beside him and crossed his legs because his dad had crossed his legs. The father wiped his brow and then his son wiped his brow. The father reached in his pocket, pulled out a pack of cigarettes, put a cigarette in his mouth and put the pack of cigarettes down beside. The commercial ends with the little boy reaching over to pick up the pack of cigarettes. I understand what they were doing that for so this is not a study about cigarettes.

The issue was they knew something that they pointed out. It is the patterns we set or the lack of patterns we set show up in the lives of our children. By the time our children are five years of age they will have read what you think is important in your life. They will have already picked up what are the stakes in your life that you have driven down. What is important in your life? I'm saying you can't bring your children up as a father united with a mother in the discipline and instruction of the Lord if you yourself don't embrace the instruction and discipline of the Lord. God may be kind enough to bring somebody else into your child's life that will fill in what you neglected and praise the Lord if that happens, but if you don't then they won't and that's normally the way it happens. By in large what you and I are embracing in our lives and what we do in their lives will ultimately have an impact in their life.

Let's look at Colossians 3. This is a similar text to that of Ephesians where he goes through the relationship of husbands to wives and wives to husbands and children to their parents. Now let's look at Colossians 3:21 which says [21] *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.* So instead of provoking our children we want to lead and shepherd the hearts of our children. This is crucial. You cannot lead them where you aren't if you want to lead them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Secondly, to lead your children and bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord you must make a priority to bring them to the Lord that they will know the Lord.

Now we're ready to take a look in terms of how we'll do that by giving you these five takeaways. As we do I want to look at a couple of passages of Scripture and the first is John 17. So objective number one, is that to grow in favor with God you want your children to know God personally and savingly. Mary and Joseph had a number of children and this is the one Child that they didn't have to do step one with. In other words, Jesus had to grow in favor with God but He did not have to be saved by the grace of God. He came to save us by His grace. Jesus did not need to come to God savingly, personally. He came to His Father personally but He doesn't have to come savingly. He had no sin He had to be saved from. He had no sin record or sin

nature. He didn't need a new heart for He was already united with the Father and right with Him which is why He can save us from our sins. So here I'm giving you a step that I can't illustrate with Mary and Joseph because they did not need to lead Jesus to a saving relationship with Himself, who alone is the Savior.

You don't have Jesus at home as your child so your child is born in need of a Savior. So let's look at John 17 which is known as the high Priestly prayer of Jesus. There are seven petitions in this prayer. John 17:3 says *[3] And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* So you want to bring your children into a relationship with God the Father, through God the Son, in a saving relationship. Perhaps one of the best ways to look at this is to look at someone who was brought into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Let's look at II Timothy. This is the last epistle that Paul writes and he writes it to Timothy giving him direction on how to do a pastoral ministry and he takes a moment to give his personal testimony because he knows and Timothy knows that he is in prison and likely to be executed very soon.

II Timothy 1:12 says *[12] which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him (NAS).* From Paul's testimony to Timothy we can see what it means to have a personal, saving relationship with Jesus. What word is repeated the most in that verse? The word "I" is repeated six times. You have to have a personal relationship with Christ to know God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Secondly, you have to have a knowledgeable relationship, an intellectually informed relationship with Jesus Christ to know God the Father rightly, God the Holy Spirit intimately. Paul said "I suffer these things, I am not ashamed for I **know** whom I have believed." You have to know that you're a sinner. You have to know you can't save yourself and that you need a Savior. You have to know that Jesus is the Son of God and the sufficient Savior. You have to know you must come to Him by faith and repentance but it's not enough to simply know those things. It's not enough to have a rational relationship personally with Him. It begins there but doesn't end there.

Thirdly, you have to have an emotional relationship of conviction with Him. I suffer these things and I'm not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and I am *convinced*. It's not just you know you're a sinner. I know Jesus is the Son of God. I know He died for sinners and rose again. I know if I turn from sins through repentance, put my trust in Him by faith that I have eternal life. You have to be emotionally convinced. It can't just be a mind deal but it has to be a heart deal as well.

Fourthly, to have this personal, saving relationship it has to be a volitional relationship of trust. *[12] which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him (NAS).* You must put your trust in Him. Let me illustrate this. I have a chair here. I know this is a chair. I am convinced it's a chair and you can see how emotionally convinced I am that this is a chair. When do you know that I personally, rationally, emotionally and am convinced that this is a chair? You know that when I trust it to be a chair and that is by putting all my weight upon it. I know and I'm convinced so now you have to trust Him alone. It is not Jesus plus your baptism or Jesus plus your religion or Jesus plus your good intentions or Jesus plus your works. It is Jesus alone that is my only Hope for everlasting life.

Your child must come to a saving relationship with Christ and you can't make it for them. It has to be knowledgeable and you are the primary teacher, by instruction and example.

It has to be emotional with conviction. You have to pray that what you are teaching the Holy Spirit will send to their heart. Then it has to be acted upon with trust volitionally.

Fifthly, to lead our children to a saving relationship with Christ it has to be a singular direction and that is they trust in Jesus. Paul didn't say I know what I believe in but he said I know *whom* I believe. With all due respect, the date you came to Christ or threw sticks in the fire or walked down that aisle doesn't matter because there may not have been a personal relationship with Jesus on that date you did for it may have been emotional without knowledge and conviction. Paul didn't say I know when I believed. He didn't have a bad conversion experience, did he? That's not where he put his trust. It's not that you know your catechism either that you'll be going to heaven. Paul didn't say I know what I believe.

Satan can pass any Presbytery exam. He didn't say I know what I believe or when I believe nor did he put his faith in faith and say I know that I believe. His faith had one objective and it was Jesus Christ. That is where you want to bring your children. I know whom I have believed. He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him. This is the most crucial because otherwise all we're doing is raising Pharisees. You want to bring them into this personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. You want God to use you to raise them up in the Lord by first bringing them to the Lord.

Secondly, when they find out they need a new heart, new record and come to Jesus Christ for them to grow in favor with God you want them to increasingly know God accurately and directionally. Now we are back on track with Mary and Joseph. Did Jesus have to come to know God accurately? Yes, in His humanity when Jesus is in the synagogue doing His catechism I think He is really learning them. When He is there He is asking questions. He not only amazed them at the answers He had already accumulated because He was already a learner but He is asking them real questions to learn. So we then follow our Savior and we then lead our children to learn and know God accurately and to know God directionally. That is my life is directed by Jesus. Let's look at Romans 11.

After explaining the Gospel and the majesty of the Gospel the Apostle Paul is going to get ready to teach us how to live the Gospel in Romans 12:1 and following but before he gets there he concludes his exposition of the majesty of God and the Gospel with this doxology. 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.*

The Gospel brings us to a doxology but part of that doxology is the declaration of “God You're too much!” You are inscrutable. To scrutinize is to study something. Paul says I can study You and know You but I can never completely know You. Isn't that refreshing? If you could completely know God then you must be one too. He is beyond our finding out. You can never know God exhaustively but you can know Him intimately, accurately, personally and directionally in your relationship with Him. That brings us to number three.

Thirdly, to increasingly know God intentionally and intimately you want to teach your children to be learners. That means you want to take preaching, Bible reading, singing, prayer and worship and always focus them in on the God of glory. In teaching our children to know God intimately and intentionally not only do we want them to become learners but we want to guide their learning. You need to know God in His three great acts – as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. You want to teach your children those three things. God made you. This fall I'll be

doing a study on the assault of God as Creator and how it's even working its way into the evangelical church that in reality God did not create man in His image with a direct act of special creation. Certainly using instrumentation but He made us and He spoke into creation all that exists. Who is the Lord our God? It is He who made you and not we ourselves. You are not a cosmic accident. The Lord God even in a sin-cursed world has designed you from the womb with all of the imperfections to be in His image and to know Him in ways that others cannot know Him.

God is your Redeemer. In God, you are saved by grace alone but yet grace is never alone. God is your Sustainer. He gives you the very breath you breathe and the heart that is beating, the oxygen you take in and everything you ingest and all that is surrounding you. He is your Sustainer. So we teach our children what it means that God made you, God saves you and God sustains you. That means you have to teach your children to know God intimately and intentionally as the Triune God. We have to learn to pray Trinitarian. Can you pray to Jesus? Yes. Can you pray to the Holy Spirit? Yes, but the overall fabric of our prayer life is to the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit. Jesus said, "Pray in the Spirit. Pray in My Name. Pray, our Father who art in heaven..." How do you worship? You worship the Father through the Son and in the Spirit.

Today I can walk into so called evangelical conservative churches and walk out and never understand that God dwells in three Person as one God and never hear or see that. There are wonderful spiritual songs of testimony particularly some of the better contemporary pieces that are out there that have always been with us but the great hymns that stand the test of time are not only put together with excellence and good theology but almost all of them are Trinitarian. The Father authored your existence and He created all things through His Son. Then the Holy Spirit superintended to bring the creation from chaos to cosmos. God authored your salvation before the foundation of the world. The Son accomplished your salvation and the Holy Spirit applied your salvation. We are being sustained by the grace of God. The Father has made the plans that are benevolent for us. The Son is interceding for us and the Holy Spirit is interceding in us with groaning's that are too deep to be uttered. That is the glorious Trinitarian work of our God as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

Fourthly, to find favor with God is to increasingly glorify God and enjoy Him. You may think I'm just too Presbyterian for using this language but Baptists also have a confession using this called the London Confession and the Philadelphia Confession. These bring the same emphasis as the Westminster Confession and Spurgeon's catechism that was developed from the old London Confession of 1689. It starts like this. What is the chief end of man? Why did God make me? Why did God save me? Why does God uphold me? It is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Notice that it is a singular objective that God made you with a two-fold application. What is the chief purpose or end of man? This is singular. The chief end of man is to glorify and enjoy God forever. Isn't that two objectives? No, it's two sides of one coin. The more you glorify Him the more you enjoy Him and the more you enjoy Him the more you glorify Him. We bring our children to understand this. No idol in life can fill your soul but the God of glory will. When you know Him and all of His fullness, then you will glory in Him alone. When you glory in Him alone, He will fill you up with joy that is overflowing.

Fifthly, to find favor with God is to increasingly make God known professionally and thoughtfully. This is how to increasingly grow in favor with God. All these things you are learning are increasing. Son or daughter, I want to show you how you can grow professionally and thoughtfully. We have come to use the word *professional* as a word of excellence. He's a

professional. Sometimes we use it wrongly. One of my good friends wrote a book to ministers and said “Gentleman we’re not professionals” yet I would suggest to you that we are in the historic use of that word. Professional can also mean ‘attachment’ where it’s just his profession.

The root of the word profession means that those recognized for whatever they do in life is a calling, a vocation. I have a vocation as a husband, a father and a great vocation as a grandfather. I have a vocation as a pastor and a citizen. I have numerous vocations. The way I fulfill my vocations is a profession of my faith. That’s where the word professional came from. They do what they do well because it is a profession of our faith in whatever vocation it might be. Do your work heartily as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23). Your vocations are worship. They are a declaration of who you believe and what you believe. Do it thoughtfully.

Here is what you want to teach your child. Son or daughter, when you were born into this world as a sinner, you were born with a sin nature and that’s why you sin so let me tell you the mantra you were born into. If it feels good then do it and then go find some ‘ism’ to believe that supports what you’re doing because of what you are feeling. When you become a Christian you get rid of that thinking. Now it’s not feel, do, think but now it’s think, do, feel. You live your Christian life thoughtfully. You are to be growing to understand life Biblically in order to engage and live life Biblically. Life becomes a profession of faith because you have learned how to think and then do and then feel.

In closing, Lord, help us to make Briarwood an environment where families are nurtured in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Father, make our families to be environments in which children are being brought up in the Lord because they are first brought to the Lord and then as they are brought to the Lord increasingly they will know the Lord accurately and directionally for life. Increasingly they will know the Lord intentionally and intimately. Increasingly they will glorify and enjoy Him. Increasingly they will know Him and profess Him in life and increasingly they will know Him thoughtfully and reflectively. God make those families that way because of a dad and mom becoming not only mentors to their children but models for their children of increasing in the knowledge and love for the Lord their God. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the extraordinary privilege to raise up another generation beginning with the promise from You that says “I will be a God to you and to your children after you.” So Father help us learn from Your Word. Thank You for the illustrations in the real life of Mary and Joseph. We know that they are imperfect models for we only have one perfect Model and that’s the Trinity as our Model. It is You as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That is our perfect Model but thank You for these models and models from our own families that we can learn from. Thank You for Your Word that gives us an inerrant, infallible direction and we’ll give You the praise and glory in Jesus’ Name, Amen.