

X. Parenting in Biblical Perspective  
*Biblical Parenting Illustrated in the Lives of Joseph and Mary*  
“The Four-Fold Paradigm of Parental Practice – #4: Favor with Man”

Luke 2

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

April 6, 2014 – Evening Sermon

I'd like to start by looking in Romans 13. We have a couple of more lessons in this series. I want to address the issue of what the Bible has to say to parents concerning a Biblical approach to sex education. There is a whole book in the Bible devoted to it called Proverbs that definitely handles that issue. Secondly I'll be doing a study on family worship and best practices. Then thirdly we'll look at what the Bible says about child abuse. In this study, though we move to the fourth piece of the four-fold map that guided the parenting of Mary and Joseph in the life of Jesus and His siblings. We have already noted that as Jesus has finished His adolescence it says that He grew in strength, wisdom and favor with God. The one that we take up in this study is the one that is not identified as Jesus gets to the 12 year mark but is identified when Jesus gets to manhood in Luke 2:52 which says *[52] And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.* Some time in this adolescence period Mary and Joseph had taught Him about how to grow in favor with man, how to relate to humanity, how to have right relationship that are encouraging and edifying with men and women.

How do we do that? What should we do and how do you approach that? I would like to read two definitive passages of Scripture about this notion of our relationships, one from the two patriarchs of the early church, one from Peter and one from Paul. I'd like to start with the one from Paul first in Romans 13. I will be drawing from both of these passages as I draw out some basic facts for us. How should I as a believer relate to the various entities that Paul is directing me?

Romans 13:1-14 says *[1] Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. [3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, [4] for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. [5] Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. [6] For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. [7] Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

*[8] Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. [9] For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." [10] Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

*[11] Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. [12] The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13] Let us*

*walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. [14] But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

Now I'd like to look at I Peter 2. Here Peter makes a similar exhortation in this definitive book of our relationship to God in our relationship with one another. I Peter 2:13-17 says *[13] Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, [14] or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. [15] For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. [16] Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. [17] Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.* There are many other texts and some I will refer to in just a moment in looking at this matter of being in favor with God.

A person said to me "Pastor I'd like to ask you a question but don't worry it's not a theological question." Then that means it's not a question because all of life is theology and that certainly is a factor when it comes to our living in favor that is a gracious, appropriate relationship with man. The word favor harkens back to the notion of graciousness, even as Noah found favor in the sight of God. Noah was an instrument of and an object of grace. So how do we graciously grow in our relationship with God and how do we graciously relate to humanity? When children are born into this world they have a desire for relationships. God built that into us but they have a need to be taught relationships. You do not get a blank tablet. Your child is born a sinner and therefore their direction is not toward proper relationships that honor the Lord but manipulative relationships. If you don't believe your child is born with that default system of manipulation then you have never had one. If you have had one you know that Biblical truth is verified in God's Word.

I want to remind you that your objective in parenting is evangelism which is speaking to the heart and discipling your child in and for Jesus Christ that they may grow in wisdom from above, that they may know how to possess their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit in stature, that they can grow in grace and knowledge of God with the disciplines of grace. So, what about this matter of their increasing in their relationship with man, that is with humanity? This is certainly a theological issue because man is made in the image of God. So to understand humanity you have to understand God. So to know mankind and how to relate to mankind I not only need to be directed by God but I need to know who God is because man is a reflection of God, male and female. So how is it that I'm to relate to them?

I want to divide this up into two ways. First of all I want to talk about what it means to have a right relationship and what it does not mean. It doesn't mean we somehow capture someone's affection for us but that we know how to relate to people so that they are edified by their relationship with us. In other words, we're not learning how to manipulate humanity but we are learning how to motivate humanity and how we can be an asset in the lives of others. In favor with man means a right view of mankind and a right view of relationships. So let's take on this matter of a right view first.

When you are looking at humanity and understanding who they are you have to understand the three great works of God – creation, the curse upon sin/the fall, and redemption. I know some of you perhaps thought I was just going to give some best practices here but I don't believe in that shortcut. I believe you need to take the time to teach your children sound doctrine and that takes time. When you teach them about sound doctrine you are teaching them about God as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

Sometimes we sing a song here that says “We love the Lord not because of what He does but because of who He is.” I know that no matter what He does He is worthy of our praise and our love but in reality we have created a false dichotomy. There is no dichotomy between who God is and what God does. You know who God is by what He does. He creates. He brings the judgment upon sin, the fall and He brings redemption and sustaining grace into our lives. What does this have to do with knowing how to relate to humanity and teaching my children?

First of all, we’re teaching our children that they are made in the image of God and every single person they meet is made in the image of God. You cannot love God if you’re not committed to love those who are made in His image. That does not mean we have to love everything that they do. I have just had this same conversation with someone who has been told that if they want to love another they have to love the behavior they have chosen and I said to them you don’t get emotionally blackmailed when you love people. When you love people that does not mean you love everything they do but what they do is not going to stop you loving them and in loving them that does not mean you have to affirm, enable or accept what they do. That is something we have to learn how to deal with but we are dealing with people who are made in the image of God and we can’t forget that.

Secondly, that means everyone was made from one man, Adam. That means that everybody you meet comes from Adam. Therefore I believe to properly relate to humanity you have to go back to the creation doctrine that everybody you meet is of one race. This bifurcation and more of humanity into multiple races is basically a product of Darwinian atheism. We as Christians understand that we came from one man. We may have multiple tints of our skin, multiple features that have been shaped by where we live in microevolution but everyone you meet is of one race. You learn to see everyone that way because God’s Word frames the way you see them. It does not mean the Bible doesn’t teach ethnoses. Ethnos means that people have cultural settings, they have an ethnicity, they have a national setting, they have a heart language and your love has to contextualize into the context of their cultural setting all of that but that does not mean we divide people up in terms of the races that are built upon macroevolution concepts. We see everybody having descended from Adam.

So we see everyone made in God’s image and that’s what we teach our children. Secondly, while they have multiple ethnoses everyone comes in one race to us. In the fall we teach our children that we are all made in the image of God but because of Adam’s sin everybody you meet is a sinner and there is not one exception. That is why they sin. So we quickly begin to set our children’s expectations and their relationships with other people. Here is humanity and all of humanity is born of Adam and that means in Adam they sinned. Therefore they come into this world with a sin nature and therefore they sin. Everyone you meet that has not been born again in a relationship with the second Adam, Jesus Christ, is born a sinner and totally depraved.

Let me explain what that means and doesn’t mean. That doesn’t mean that everything that they do is as sinful as it could be but it does mean that sin permeates everything that we think, say or do apart from the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Total depravity doesn’t mean absolute depravity but it does mean that our depravity infiltrates, permeates and stains everything in our life. The best example I have on this is that our life is like a three egg omelet with one bad egg. The bad egg ruined the other two eggs when you put it in there. How come if we’re totally depraved we’re not absolutely depraved? That has to do with God’s common grace where God is restraining us from being as evil as we would be. All of these things ought to break our hearts but it doesn’t amaze us when evil breaks out in massacres, in Hitlers, and in Mussolinis. The abortion clinics sponsored by various organizations promote it in our society. What ought to

amaze us is that we're not all doing that. God's common grace restrains people from being as evil as they would be whether they are a Christian or not.

So we have to teach our children the proper view of men and women made in the image of God with one race in various ethnos. Secondly, that everyone you meet is born a sinner and that sin permeates and penetrates into every way they think, live, act and do. Thirdly, you teach them redemption in Lord. Those whom you meet by God's grace fall into one of two categories. They are either saved or they are lost. They may be barely saved or baby saved or growing saved or going through a difficult time saved but everyone you meet is either saved or lost and that affects the way that you relate to them. Teach your children that every person they meet that is lost is a person you want to be saved. Those you meet who are saved are in need for you to encourage them and you need encouragement from people like them who are saved. That's how we need to look at lost and saved people.

I've used this illustration before. I said to someone "All of humanity falls into two categories, what do you think the two categories are?" He replied "those who think there are two categories and those who don't." I said "No, in all of humanity you are either a dog person or a cat person." I miss my dog. He died several years ago. His name was Tripper and he was the greatest sheltie that ever existed. My goal in life was to be as good as Tripper thought that I was. Every time I came home he would meet me at the door, shake everything there was to shake, lick me all over and want to sit up on my lap. I would never own a cat as long as I live. At Halloween you don't see a dog next to a witch. The greatest waste of time in your life is when you sit down to think of a name for your cat. They could care less what you call them and if you call them. You think that you're your cat's master and actually you are not for you are on your cat's staff. If they play with you it's because they want to. If you want to it doesn't matter because it's only if they want to. I wash, pet, feed and play with my dog and I know what he is thinking, 'My master is so good to me. He must be god.' First of all you can't wash a cat but if you could or whatever you think you're doing for a cat, your cat looks up at you and thinks 'My master is so good to me. I must be god.'

We are either cat people or dog people for we're going through life either thinking 'we are god' and it's all about us or 'there is a great God who has been gracious to us' and deserves our praise. We need to teach our children that there are people who are saved and there are people who are lost. Those who are lost you are not called to sit in judgment upon them but you are called to reach them with the Gospel. Is there a place for moral evaluations? Absolutely, for James talks about what to judge and not to judge and we'll cover that in our series of James. You and I who have been saved by grace know that we do not have the moral superiority to sit in judgment upon anyone else's soul or heart. The only one who can sit in judgment upon someone's soul or heart is the One who is righteous and able to save them. If you can't save someone then you can't sit in judgment over them. If you had to be saved then you can't sit in judgment over them. We are ambassadors of Christ to bring them to Christ. So we are teaching our children how to see humanity and how to respond in encouraging believers and to evangelize the lost.

So having said all that, what would be the right relationships with mankind? I want to draw on various passages of Scriptures for this. First, you look at your relationships in light of your existing formal relationship. So my number one human relationship is my marriage. My parenting is directly related to my marital relationship. Secondly, my grandparenting is related to it. My ministry is related to it. If a man cannot manage his own household and is not the husband of one wife or loving his wife, he cannot pastor and care for the bride of Christ with any

effectiveness whatsoever. So if you're married you need to focus on that marital relationship. If you're not married you focus on your Savior and your walk with Him and how He would lead you in that matter.

The second thing is family relationships. Are you a parent or a child? This has to do with your immediate family relationships – parent to child, child to parent. The Bible is clear that has a parent you are to raise up your children, not provoking them to anger. Would the Bible tell you not to provoke your children to anger if it wasn't possible to provoke them to anger? So I don't do that in order to raise them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I am to labor to create an environment of order and ardor. I believe the marital relationship sets the parental relationships of order in the home and ardor in the home. That is passion, compassion and love in the home, inviting the children in this. When they are disciplined they know it's out of love. In everything because of the atmosphere in the home they know it's out of love, that's ardor.

Who establishes ardor in the home? Most of us think that ardor in the home comes from the mother. I do not believe that. I believe that a wife's relationship with her husband of respect and completion and submission sets the tone of order in the home. A husband's commitment to love his wife sacrificially sets the environment of ardor in the home. So when the marital relationship is right our children begin to see that and experience that in environment of the parental relationship to them. Then they are called to do three things to their parents as they are in the home – honor, respect and obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. It is given to us with a promise. If that setting is not established then you've just abused your child because you're now sending them out into the world not knowing how to relate to others because they are supposed to learn it in the context of the family. That's how they learn to deal with the issues of life.

Then to the extended family make use of grandparents and grandparents make yourself useful. Then you can enjoy those uncles, aunts and cousins. I still remember those times during the year where our extended family would find a way to come together with regularity. I still remember those things I learned from various uncles and aunts and all those precious things in that extended family. Here is the tricky thing. You are supposed to raise your children to leave you and not cleave to you and when they leave you, you are losing a son or daughter for they are now uniting to their spouse and their relationship back with you is now in the context of the unity they have as a husband or wife. This isn't two families coming together but a new family that just got started and its first priority is to establish a relationship with you where you now become the extended family, not the immediate family. You are the first person of the extended family but they now begin a new immediate family.

There are various ways to learn that. My dad and mom just told me "when you get married, praise the Lord, we'll be praying for you, make it work." Now my mother in law was not all that excited about her daughter's selection and my acquiescence to my request for marriage. She kind of sign off on it but didn't embrace the notion very much so the way she got the point across to Cindy was she said "Cindy, on January 26 we are going to go to that wedding ceremony and you're going to be married and I am going to be happy for you (Although it didn't sound real happy when she was telling me about this) and you two will encounter challenges. Let me tell you what you don't do. Don't come back here. Whatever you need to do you work it out there." She was trying to impress on Cindy that this wasn't going to just be a big date. This is a marriage and you have a responsibility to establish that marriage.

Our children need to see a husband and a wife committed to each other, then committed to them and raising them and as they leave us they need to know how to relate back to us, not with the expectation that they are still our children but with the fullness that they have left us. They are cleaving to another and we just went from command to coaching whenever you want us. We just went to that new relationship together.

Then you want to make sure that you have your relationships in the church family. Have you ever noticed how in the church family we are called to treat one another? We are supposed to treat our elders as fathers. Older women in the church are to be treated as mothers. Do you see how the family is the seminary for the church? The very relationships we're supposed to have in the church we were supposed to have been learned at home. We call one another brothers and sisters. Where is it that we're supposed to learn how to have a right relationship with others? Is it not with our brothers and sisters in the Lord what we have learned with our brothers and sisters at home?

Here is the basic relational issue. Friends you get to choose. Family you don't get to choose. Family is given to you. Your children were given to you. Your brothers and sisters were given to you. Your parents were given to you. We don't get to choose them. We are called to love them. As we learn to do that we are preparing ourselves as to how we relate to others and how we relate to those in the body of Christ. I don't get to choose who are members of this church. Jesus does that. There have been many times in my life that I have been drawn to itinerant ministries because in itinerant ministries you can choose who you want to minister and who you don't want to minister to. As a pastor I don't have that choice. Honestly, I don't want that choice. I want to love God's people but God brings them to Himself and brings them into His church. What I get to do and you get to do with those whom He chooses to bring into the family of God is we get to love them in and through the Lord. So there is the church family.

Now how do I relate in the world, to my nation, to be in subjection to those who are over me and how am I supposed to make friends in the world without being a friend of the world? Those are things we need to teach our children. We need to teach our children the difference between friendship and fellowship. You and I are called to befriend people – be a friend. I'm constantly amazed at those who tell me 'that church just isn't friendly' and I will turn and ask 'do you think you get the chance to say they're not friendly when you slip in to sit on the back row and are rushed to get out? When are they going to get the opportunity to be friendly to you?' Friend is what we go do and not how we measure other people so we want to befriend others. Jesus was a friend to sinners and I want to be a friend to others.

Fellowship is a different story. Fellowship is one of transparency and vulnerability. Psalm 1:1 says *[1] Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.* You need to be careful where your fellowship is which are those reciprocal relationships and choose your fellowship carefully. Befriend any and all but fellowship is to be done with thoughtfulness. To whom will you open up your life and give the green light to and who will you take a green light from?

This is one of the reasons why I believe learning the law of God in the context of the Gospel is important. Jesus is our Husband that will not let us go and that He loves us and that's why I love the law. My Savior wrote that law and then in that law He tells me how to love Him who loves me. In that law He tells me how to love others where I don't take life but I promote life. I'm not to commit adultery but I'm to commit purity, chastity. I'm not to lie but I'm to speak the truth in love. I'm not to covet but I'm to be content. Because He is sufficient I'm free

to embrace these things, because I just found out what thrills my Lover, Jesus Christ. Those are important to me and we have to teach our children the law of God.

First of all, the law of God will show them that they are helpless and they need a Savior. When they come to that Savior here is the basic roadmap of how to love Him and others. Start in the Word. There is nothing more practical that can be given to us than this glorious roadmap. Notice its priorities. Honor your father and mother. When I'm home I honor, respect and obey. When I left and cleft I no longer obey my parents but that doesn't mean I don't listen to them or get advice from them but I am not under their command. I now have a family and I'm responsible before the Lord but I continue to honor and respect my parents in this new relationship where they have become an extended family.

Then that leads me to the sanctity of life. Do not murder. Then that leads me to the sanctity of marriage. Do not commit adultery. Then that leads me to the sanctity of truth. Do not bear false witness. Then that leads to the sanctity of work. Do not steal. Then that leads to the sanctity of contentment. Do not covet. It is where He takes me through those things by priority and that leads to the second exhortation I would give you.

Not only learn the Gospel use of the law in parenting your children, but secondly learn to help your children establish relationships by priorities. There is the marital that leads to the family. The family leads to the church. The church leads into the community. The community leads into my citizenship. Where and how do I fit into the workplace and all of those relationships? Learn to teach your children the priorities of relationships.

What is one of the best ways you can do that? Not only teach them but most importantly show them. Expose your children to how you live relationships out in your life and expose your children to relationships in life. In the effort to have a strong family don't make your family a bubble. Learn to take your family and your children into relationships. One of the best ways is to bring relationships into your family. It is called the ministry of hospitality. Let your children see how you welcome people into your home, how you relate to people in your home and how you relate to people outside of your home. So that they get to watch you in your relationships and see your priorities in life and they get the privilege to follow, see and embrace what is happening in your life.

Let them learn that there are levels of intimacy in life where you can love people and have levels of intimacy. Very clearly our Savior models this for us in His humanity with the 70, the 12 and the 3. There are levels of relationships in life and you begin to show them how to have these levels of relationships. They have to learn this and you're the best teacher for them. You are the first teacher. You shouldn't be the only teacher but you're the best teacher and the first teacher.

Teach them who God is and who man is in the image of God as Creator, what man is fallen, how man is saved, how you relate to those not yet saved and how you relate to those who are saved. Teach them how to relate to others in the priorities of life and the Biblical to relationships. Teach them how to be a friend to all and have the fellowship that is wise and you bring with wisdom people into the intimacy of your life. Teach them the levels of relationships in life and let them see how you do it as you take them into the world with you and then as you open your home and bring the world into your home.

We have this amazing thing today that I believe is attributing to this lack of adolescence. Adolescence in my lifetime has moved from 16.8 years of age to 26.8 years of age. I think one of the things that is contributing to it is the technologically encouraged cocooning of families in their home. Our homes used to be centers of hospitality and now they are castles that we retreat

into, fill up the mote and close the door, instead of opening them and bringing people in where your children can see how you relate to them. What a glorious privilege that we have to teach our children and they are learning from you one way or another, how to not only have a relationship with their Savior but out of that relationship with their Savior, relate to others. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for this call that the Apostles give us to know how to relate to others in a way that honors Christ, in a way that we are asset in the lives of others, how that is to be done in marriages, families – immediate and extended, how it's to be done in the family of God, in the setting of our nation, in the setting of this world and how we're to do it in various relationships whether it be a civil relationships or civic relationships or work relationships. We get the opportunity to direct, mold and help our children, first with wisdom for all of life, then their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, then in favor with God through a living, grace-filled relationship with Christ, absorbed in the means of grace to grow in grace and then in favor with man that we are an asset for we know how to speak truth to others in love. For the sake of love we do not diminish truth and for the sake of truth we do not diminish others but we love them. Father, bless these parents as they embrace this privilege and opportunity, in Jesus' Name, Amen.