

III. Parenting in Biblical Perspective
Biblical Parenting Illustrated in the Lives of Joseph and Mary
“In the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord—Five Objectives”

Luke 2

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

February 2, 2014 – Evening Sermon

We will be looking at Luke 2 and Ephesians 6. We will be coming back and forth to Luke in this series for a number of reasons because I’m trying to draw the principles of Scripture and they are illustrated in the lives of Joseph and Mary but in God’s providence there is not a lot of information about the parenting of Joseph and Mary except what Luke has been led to record and most of that is found in Luke 2. First let’s look at Luke 2 and here are some highlights of the parenting decisions of Mary and Joseph. Luke 2:21-24 says [21] *And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.* [22] *And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they (his parents, Mary and Joseph) brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord* [23] *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”)* [24] *and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”* Now let’s look at the conclusion of His infancy up to His adolescence. Notice how it is summarized.

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.* Now let’s look at the conclusion of His adolescence up to His manhood, the description of what is happening in Jesus’ life. Luke 2:51-52 says [51] *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive (He honored His father and mother, following the very tenets of the fifth commandment) to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.* (Now we see what is described in His progress from adolescence now to His maturity in manhood, with a very similar phrase.) [52] *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*

Now I’d like to look at Ephesians 6. In the next couple of studies I want to focus on the fatherhood of Joseph and the motherhood of Mary but I wanted to give you what they as parents were committed to do as Paul explains it and as they illustrate it. Let’s look at what Paul says in Ephesians 6 concerning children and parents. Ephesians 6:1-4 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.”* [4] *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.* I will return to this passage in the next study but I wanted to give it to you just for a broad statement.

It says in Ephesians 6 that children are to honor their father and mother and be submissive. Here is the child Jesus both expected to honor His father and mother and does honor His father and mother. When you see this description of His formation as a child – He grew in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man – do not separate that from the parents expectation of Him and His response. He was submissive to His parents. He was not only submissive to His teachers in the temple and the synagogue but He was also submissive to His parents.

Also look at the broad call of parents with the father leading the way. First there is the negative in Ephesians 6 – do not provoke your children to anger. There are multiple ways you can provoke your children to anger. One is by inappropriate discipline. Two would be the lack of discipline. Three would be discipline that is disproportionate to what is being dealt with. Four would be discipline that is only negative and never positive discipline in the life of a child. So there are multiple ways that in the discipline and instruction of the Lord fathers and mothers can provoke their children. So Paul says not to provoke your children.

So what should you do? The best way to avoid a negative is to embrace the positive. The positive is to bring them up, raise them up in the nurture (where the father and mother are creating a nurturing household, a place where things can grow) and admonition of the Lord. When I read the word nurture the picture in my mind is a greenhouse. A greenhouse is what the family ought to establish for a child, where seeds are planted, stalks are coming up and it's being nurtured in a proper environment that contributes to its growth. Not only is there nurture but there is instruction or admonition. That instruction and admonition is very clearly to be faithful to God's Word because it's the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

In the Lord children are to honor and obey their parents. Parents are to nurture, instruct and teach their children in the environment of the Lord. You are required to give your children Christian education. That is not saying that any one delivery system of Christian education is to be selected or proposed. There are multiple ways you can deliver Christian education. The Bible doesn't tell us what delivery of system that it is but it is telling us what the definition of it is. It is discipline and instruction of the Lord and who is responsible to make sure it's delivered. Those are parents. The parents are responsible for the choices that you make about how your child is going to be educated.

Children never like for me to say this but I will say it. I think the four greatest inheritances of your children is number one a spiritual inheritance, number two a good library, number three a good Christ-centered education and whatever system you choose to use, you deliver it as a parent using those teachers in that system and number four a small inheritance. The small inheritance is the one that children don't like to hear me say. I have my own reasons for saying that and one is to get my children ready. The second reason is as a pastor you ought to see how many times I have had to clean up what people have not been able to handle in terms of generational given wealth. I know there are exceptions so I would not put that down as the law of the Meads and Persians. Seems like most focus on how much money they can leave their children but I like the bumper sticker I saw that said 'being of sound mind and will, I spent it all.' I'm sure children didn't enjoy seeing that but they spent it all and used it all. The biggest issue for me is the matter of a good library, a good Christian education with a Christian world and life view and also a spiritual legacy. That is where I'm headed in this study in terms of the five objectives of how you engage in nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Before I get to these objectives let me give you a couple of definitions I have already put into place. One is that we have attempted to define the family Biblically. The family Biblically defined consists of one man and one woman united in the covenant of marriage with parental responsibility for all of their children. The children may come by way of foster care, adoption or by biological reproduction but we are responsible for the children in our household. I recognize that we are in a sin-cursed world so there are single parents and therefore we as a church are ready to respond to that to assist in those situations but that does not mean that we are called to redefine the family but what we need to keep before us is the Biblically defined family. While it's absolutely appropriate to have ministries designed for people in various seasons and

situations of life we are always trying to pull one another into the family of God and establish families whereby the seminary of life can take place, where people can be raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

I read a report the other day that said it cost 240 million dollars to do this research. It was a government research project and the result of this three year project is they said that children who are best adjusted to life come from a home with two adults. Now that is interesting how they phrased that. Living in a home with two adults tends to set children up for a better shot at life for being equipped in life. Isn't that an amazing insight? We didn't really need to spend all that money for we could just see how God designed it to begin with. Now because of sin we have to overcome various situations from single parent homes because of various reasons and then singles being drawn into families even though you have a ministry to singles. However that is the Biblical definition of the family.

What is the essential practice of Biblical parenting? Effective Biblical parenting is only achievable with Christian parents. You have to be a Christian to be able to really do Biblical parenting and they are insistently bringing the church to their home by intentionally bringing their home to the church. In other words, God's family for you, the church, and your home, your family for God, are united. I gave the instances in Luke 2 and Luke 4 that affirm that in Mary and Joseph. Where are we now?

We took this step in the last study. Biblical parenting is a commitment by Christian parents to bring their covenant children to a saving relationship in Christ within Christ's church by intentional Gospel evangelism and discipleship. Parenting is evangelizing and discipling and the home surrounded by the church is constantly engaged in that. What you are attempting to do as a parent with the churches support and equipping is to raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. What does that look like? I want to give you five objectives to accomplish Biblical parenting.

First I want to cycle back to the last study for a moment. You have a problem because your child is born with a sin record and a sin nature. Your child is born dead in their sins and at enmity against God but if you're a Christian you also have a promise. God says "I will be a God to you and your children after you. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, you and your household." The promise is for you and your children and for all who are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself. So God has built the family into the Gospel communication of His covenant blessings. He uses the family.

Parenting works. By the way, bad parenting works also but Godly parenting works too! That is why it says in Proverbs 22:6, *[6] Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* That is the basic common sense that God gives us into how He uses parenting in the lives of their children. Your children will have to make decisions in their life standing before God but parenting works. There are exceptions to the rule that prove the rule ultimately but parenting is something that God uses and He has attached a promise to it.

Your child is born dead and you want to see your child come to life in Christ. You want to see them right with God. In other words, you want to evangelize them and disciple them. You have available to you five power plants that are greater than the sin nature and the sin record of your child. Power plant number one is the Word of God. The Word of God is powerful, active, and sharper than any two edged sword. Number two, from the Word of God you have a very specific message that is powerful. It is called the Gospel of saving grace in Jesus Christ. *[16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek* (Romans 1:16). The third power plant is the

Holy Spirit in your home and at work within your home. The fourth power plant is the church of God which uses the means of grace which is Divinely fashioned weapons of the Holy Spirit that can tear down strongholds and bring every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ. The fifth power plant is the power of prayer. *[16b] The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working* (James 5:16b).

With those power plants, if I'm going to build a greenhouse to raise my child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord so that I'm not provoking my child to anger but I am prodding my child to Christ with evangelism and discipleship, then I have five objectives. When it comes time to take a vacation how many of you say 'let's just get on the road and take a vacation'? No, generally people will sit down and say here's where we're going and now we know the road to take. In the next few studies we will look at how fathers and mothers get to these objectives. You are uniquely gifted. These objectives can be achieved in a unique way because of the way God has gifted women to be mothers. These are also accomplished in the unique way God has gifted men to be fathers. Fathers and mothers are not the same in their parenting. They bring complimentary tasks and gifts and perspectives on it but where does the father and mother desire to get to in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? What is the destination? Here are the five objectives.

Number one, your first objective is a personal, robust, saving relationship with Christ. This is a challenge. It's a challenge whenever you're working in the life of your child and teaching your child the Word of God. Here is what we don't want to happen. You don't want to let your child think that they are Christians because they have been born into a Christian home. There is a whole movement of theology even within our circles in which there is the assumption that the child is born regenerate. That does not fit within Biblical theology. You have a promise of God to work in the life of your child, not the presumption that they are already regenerate. Can God regenerate in the womb? Yes He can but that is not His normal means. John the Baptist was quickened in the womb. Jeremiah was called from the womb. He can even bring these children who are being aborted into a saving relationship in a supernatural way but the normal means by where people are born again is by the Spirit and the Word. So you are praying for the Spirit to be at work in your home and you're bringing the Word in your home. You want your child to be converted. I am not presuming their conversion or their regeneration.

The first vow parents take when their child is baptized is 'do you believe that your child is in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit.' They have a bad record. They need a new record. They need a new heart. The parents are confessing that their child needs to be born again with a new heart and a new record. You can't give them that new heart. You can't convert them but you can evangelize them. You can call them to Christ. So you don't want to presume that they are regenerate. As you are teaching them what the Christian life view and life style are you have to carefully avoid raising a Pharisee. In other words, here is what good Christian boys do without telling your son you need to be Christian to do that from the heart. This is what we're going to do in our home and this is the way we're going to live here.

Pharisee-ism can send people to hell. They think they are going heaven because of how good they are but Pharisees do make good next door neighbors. They usually don't steal from you. When a child is doing what they are supposed to do that makes for a better home. Your children are under control with dignity but that is not your objective that they simply be under control with dignity but that they are being called to Christ in faith and repentance. You need to have a personal, robust, saving relationship with Christ.

The second objective is to have a functional and committed relationship with Christ's church. You children are picking up on your view of the church all the time. When I was pastoring a church in Charlotte I had been away for a couple of weeks on vacation and I came back and walked into the children's educational wing. I like to say hello to the kids and as I was walking through the hall two boys came out of the bathroom at the same time. They were about 6 or 7 years old and one of them came up to me and he said to me "Hello Pastor Reeder, did you have a good vacation?" I said "Yes son, thank you." The other one came up to me and he kicked me and said "What's going on Harry?" Would you like to take a guess at how I'm being talked about in which home? Our children pick up on our view of the church. It's tough because Christ's church is not perfect but if we make our appearance before our children a denigration of Christ's bride and His body in its local manifestation they will pick up on it. If we draw them into the joy of Her covenants, Her vows, Her sacred ways, Her glorious task, and Her great mission, they begin to pick up on that as well.

The third objective is you want to communicate to your child a Trinitarian-shaped Christian world and life view. Son, I want you to learn about creation, redemption and providence. How did this creation get here? The Father authored it. The Son accomplished it. The Holy Spirit hovered over the creation to bring chaos into cosmos and order. He made all things whether visible or invisible for nothing was made without Him making it. There is another great work and that is God's great work of redemption. How did that come into existence? Before I ever existed the Father, out of love, authored my salvation. The Son came into this world and accomplished my salvation and the Holy Spirit came and brought me to Christ that I might be saved. What about how I live my life in the sustaining hand of God? The Father has authored that all things work together for good in my life. The Son is interceding for me right now and the Holy Spirit is relentlessly working in my life and actually leading my prayers with groanings too deep to be uttered. Creation, redemption and providence – it is important we have a Trinitarian Christian world and life view.

I think this is important and hopefully you know that I love Jesus and that I believe the way the Father manifested His glory was by sending His Son and if the Holy Spirit is working in you then you'll be making much about Jesus. I'm a little concerned that in this recapturing of a Christo-centric view of the Gospel and the Word of God in Christianity, there has been a loss of a clear teaching of the doctrine of the Trinity. When we baptize we baptize in the authority of Jesus' Name but our formula is that we baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The word name is singular but there are three Persons. It is One God in three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We worship the Father through the Son and in the Spirit. We pray 'Our Father, in Jesus' Name' by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. We develop a clear, Trinitarian Christian world and life view that is Bible-framed, Holy Spirit-enabled, Christ-focused but God the Father glorifying. Those need to be taught to our children.

We my wife and I go away on vacation we'll find churches to attend while we're away. I almost always try to find a PCA church but never announce that I'm going to be there, but just go there and want to encourage them. I want to encourage you that when you go on vacation don't vacate the Sabbath, don't vacate worship but find a church where you are. Sometimes I won't find a PCA church in that area and one I think 'let's plant one.' Secondly I think 'where can I go here?' Sometimes I will walk into churches and I will hear worship and I will hear sermons that could be preached in a synagogue. They are Christ-less. They are moralistic, gospel therapy sessions about God in general but sometimes I'll hear about Christ but never in the context of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian dynamic of the Christian life is not

there. You want to raise your children with a Christian world and life view that is Trinitarian in its shape and it understands the role of the Father, the role of the Son and the role of the Holy Spirit as revealed in Scripture, in creation, redemption, providence, worship, prayer, the sacraments and in every area of the Christian life.

The fourth objective is you want to raise your children to be prepared and matured to leave you and cleave to their spouse when they are married. My generation I think missed this one. We did not do well as a generation of raising our children to leave us because we were building our whole self-image and significance on our children. We couldn't afford to let them leave. When they left our life was gone. In fact, they had become idols instead of children to raise for Christ. One, we couldn't let them go. It's tough enough to let them go when you do this right. I have some weddings coming up in the next couple of weeks and I always know the two people that are having the hardest time at a wedding. We even make jokes about them. When we tell mother-in-law jokes we're generally talking about the mother of the groom and then we have the father of the bride jokes. Those are the two having the biggest, toughest time at the wedding.

When a man gets married for his dad this is not a problem. He is saying 'praise the Lord, what took so long? I'm finally glad I got somebody who took him.' He rejoices and then one day the son will be taking care of his daddy. So here is this movement that takes place in that context of it not being a big deal for fathers and their sons. I think it is utterly absurd that we think we have to legislate a program to take care of children under our coverage of our health insurance until we're 26 years of age. My mother was packing my bag when I turned 18. There was this idea that you were being raised to leave. It's not that they didn't love you but it's that they wanted you to be a man or a woman who was ready to leave.

For the father of the bride it's kind of tough. As soon as that ceremony is over you know that you are no longer the number one man in that woman's life. You are now the number two man in your daughter's life. Then when she has a child then you go to number three. It is a descending order all the way until they put a tombstone over you. The same thing happens with the mother for she is no longer the number one woman in her son's life. She goes to number two and again that process is in place. So it's tough enough as it is but you have to make a commitment to raise your child to leave you. The average for adolescence in the 1950s that is mature skills socially to function in life was 16.5 years of age. Today it is 26.5 years of age. I think the problem is in parenting. I don't think we raise our children to leave us. We have to equip our children to leave us spiritually, physically, and socially. We are called to do that. It is not that they have to hang on with us because our life is meaningless if they are not with us. We are called to prepare and mature them to leave us and to cleave to someone that God has called them to in establishing their marriage.

The fifth objective is to pursue the four-fold paradigm of what I like to call the first family – Mary and Joseph. I will try to take a study for each one of these. Let's look back at Luke 2:40 which says (from infancy to adolescence) [40] *And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.* Another factor is added when Jesus gets to manhood. Luke 2:52 says [52] *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.* In parenting we want to give our children wisdom. I find it very interesting that two times when it gives description of Jesus' nurturing in the context of Mary and Joseph's guidance that He grew in wisdom. I don't think it's any accident that His brother James had a heart and insight to wisdom because he grew up in the same home. I think James understood wisdom as well. Look at the wisdom that is found in the book of Jude, another brother of Jesus,

even though it's not considered a wisdom book. Wisdom is not found in a Google search for facts. Wisdom is to have knowledge and understanding and how to apply it in the situations of life, even trials. I will talk more about wisdom in further studies as a general theme in parenting and how we do that.

Jesus grew in wisdom and **stature**. Now you know how to possess your body with wisdom. Wisdom comes first and then you know how to possess your body. Now I know how to have my body as a temple of the Holy Spirit. Now I know with my body that whatsoever I eat or drink I can do to the glory of God. His parents guided Him to wisdom and guided Him as to how He is to develop physically.

Then it says He grew in favor with God. The word favor is referring to covenant graces and mercies. Here is the vertical relationship with God in which is it being nurtured in the life of Jesus. You have to remember that Jesus is not only the Son of God but He is the Son of Man. Jesus didn't come out of the womb knowing the Pythagorean Theorem. He was a baby and He grew in wisdom and He grew in stature. Spiritually without a sin nature, He grew in favor with God. Why do you think when He starts His ministry God the Father says "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased"?

Fourthly, He grew in favor with man. How do you deal with humanity – saved people, lost people, rich people, poor people, Jew, Gentile? How do you treat people made in the image of God with dignity, respect and build bridges into their life that they might come over those bridges to eternal life? You pursue the four-fold paradigm. In the last study I identified the three features of children who serve Christ, who love His church and grow with a mature witness for Christ. Three things were always present. One, they were converted. Two, they were equipped, educated and had been disciplined. Three, they and their families had been and were engaged in Christ's church.

These five objectives aim at all three of these features. There is a saving, personal relationship with Christ, embedded in the church of Jesus Christ that assists you in evangelizing your child. They'll attend a Junior High Retreat and come to the know the Lord and come home and tell you. You'll think 'what have I been trying to tell you for 13 years.' That's the body of Christ working through Sunday school teachers, youth pastors, vacation Bible school leaders and all of those things. They surround and assist you. Sometimes you did the planting and watering and they'll do the reaping. Sometimes it's the other way around but all of that is working together.

To create the atmosphere of nurture and admonition in the Lord you say no to provoking the anger, yes to providing and prodding them to Christ, engaged in His church, thinking Trinity with a world and life view, coming to Christ and you bringing them up with wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man. Do you see how this overlays?

Who are the primary delivery instruments of those? It is a father and a mother. What is the father supposed to do? What is a mother supposed to do? How do they together provide this environment of nurture and admonition? I want you to come back to the next study to see what a father does and let's see how that is seen in Joseph's life. Before Jesus was five they had already lived in five different places. Why was he moving around so much? He was in Nazareth, Bethlehem, Egypt, Judea and back to Nazareth. Why couldn't he settle down? What kind of father is he? I'm drawn to this because I went to 11 schools in 12 years but I don't think Joseph was in minor league baseball like my dad was. There must be something else working here and I believe it is a great lesson about fatherhood. So we'll pick that up in our next study. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could spend together in searching and embracing the Biblical call to parenting, delivering it with Biblical precepts with illustrations from the first family that one which raised Jesus and His brothers. Continue to guide us and thank You for the joy of studying Your Word but Father we don't want to be hearers only, we want to be doers. Raise up Godly, Biblical, Christian parents that another generation might rise up. Bless their parents but most of all bless the Lord, for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.