

IV. Parenting in Biblical Perspective
Biblical Parenting Illustrated in the Lives of Joseph and Mary
“Biblical Fatherhood Illustrated in the Life of Joseph”

Luke 2; Matthew 1, 2

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We will be looking at Ephesians 6 and Deuteronomy 6 and I will be referring to Matthew 1, 2 and Luke 2 in our series on Biblical Parenting illustrated in the lives of Joseph and Mary. Recently more than one person asked me why I decided to preach through this series and there are multiple reasons why I’m doing this. I can’t recount all but I will give you three of them. One is that it is abundantly clear that the Biblical definition, concept and framework of the family is under assault in our culture. That is without question, as well as marriage which is the core relationship of family. In this study we look at Biblical fatherhood illustrated in the life of Joseph and I want to make clear how important I think this is.

I think the general assault on Biblical masculinity is clear both inside and outside of the church the Biblical concept of manhood that men and women are equal but they’re not interchangeable. God has uniquely gifted us and it goes beyond the biological plumbing that we’re different. God has made us different in many ways. The second aspect of this is sense manhood is under assault then fatherhood. I challenge you to find one drama, play or television program that does not ridicule fatherhood and fathers. Show me one that does not. Back in my day while it was certainly not realistic in many ways there was ever this ideal that something was special about fathers and mothers. It was that they were different and both were needed.

So this study and next study are crucial. Fatherhood will be illustrated with Joseph and motherhood will be illustrated with Mary. There is something powerfully different about what children need coming from a father and what children need coming from a mother. At the conclusion of this study I will give you one illustration from my life that has been backed up by a multi-million dollar study. All they had to do was go visit me and I would have told them what they spent millions of dollars to discover, about the difference of the way a father leads his child and a mother leads her child, even in their posturing when they lead their children which is indicative of their gifting to lead their children. I will give you that at the end but let’s get to Joseph.

This will end up being a 12 week study on parenting and this is our fourth study. We are looking at fatherhood focused upon Joseph’s life. Joseph is an interesting guy, isn’t he? I really identify with Joseph and in some degree identify with Jesus as a child of Joseph. Not in any way am I the Messiah which is pretty obvious but there is another way. When I get the chance to give my testimony one of the things I share with people is that I had an interesting childhood. Over the course of my education I went to eleven different schools in twelve years of education. Whenever people hear that they figure one of two things usually and one is that his dad must have been in the military or his dad must have been one step ahead of the rent collector. The latter was close but mine was that my dad was in minor league baseball and it was not a very stable environment. So I have lived all over the place.

You’re probably thinking ‘what does that have to do with tonight?’ Take a look at Matthew 1. Where’s Joseph? He is in Nazareth and he takes care of his betrothed. Because of the IRS system of that day he then goes from Nazareth to Bethlehem to pay a tax. He takes his betrothed with him and there she delivers a child. They are there anywhere from a couple of

months to two years. They are living in the stable to start with then they graduate to a house after a couple of months. Then because of the decree of Herod to kill all the children by the warning of an angel they leave Bethlehem and go to Egypt. Perhaps some of the gold given by the wise men helped fund that trip.

Every time I think of that I always think of the little kid in Sunday school who was asked to draw the flight of Jesus to Egypt. The teacher comes around and looks at his picture of Jesus' flight to Egypt where the boy had drawn a plane with four people in it. The boy said it was a flight so I he had drawn a plane and the teacher said "Who are the four people in the plane?" He said "There is Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus." The teacher said "What about the fourth one?" He said "That is Pontius the pilot." That is pretty creative thinking in Sunday school.

We don't know how long they were in Egypt but if you work through the text considering the death of Herod and the rising of his son, Archelaus, it's probably around a year. On their way back from there it seems as if Joseph attempted to stay in Judah, probably not at Bethlehem but not far from his hometown. Then he finds out Archelaus is in charge and he was as evil as his father Herod the Great and in fact in some ways maybe more so. So he had to flee Judah and he went all the way back to Nazareth. My guess is that Jesus is somewhere around five years old by this time but they have lived in Nazareth, Bethlehem, Egypt, Judah and back to Nazareth.

Why does Joseph do all this travelling? Some would say he was in Nazareth due to them being in the line of David and he goes to Bethlehem because that fulfills Scripture that the baby Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem. Then he goes to Egypt to fulfill Scripture, 'for out of Egypt I have called My Son.' Then he comes to Judah and ends back up in Nazareth to fulfill the Scripture. In other words, you know the first and second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. He goes back to Nazareth because 'He shall be called a Nazarene' which is fulfillment of Scripture.

Joseph was not moving around to fulfill Scripture. He wasn't thinking each time they moved that he needed to go there to fulfill Scripture. No, he's just moving. This is what we call the Doctrine of Divine Concurrence. God is sovereignly using Joseph's decisions to fulfill Scripture so that the Word of God is fulfilled but that's not in Joseph's mind. So why did Joseph make all those moves? Why was it that Joseph while in Nazareth was faithful to keep his wife against all the accusations and whisperings about her pregnancy? They would think 'Sure she's a virgin.' Why was it that Joseph knew exactly on the eighth day to leave Bethlehem to go six miles to get Jesus circumcised? Why was it that Joseph knew on the fortieth day that he was to take her back up to the temple travelling again that six miles and Mary was to be baptized with the waters of purification and Jesus being the first born was to be committed with the proper sacrifices and to be presented on the fortieth day? How and why did Joseph know all that? How was it that when Jesus stands to preach in the synagogue as He begins His earth ministry 'that He opened the book of Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth as had been His custom'? Why was it that when Jesus is twelve years old they go to Jerusalem and His infancy now turns into adolescence and now He is on His way to manhood and that was their yearly custom?

Why was it that when they summed up Jesus' adolescence it says in Luke 2:40, [40] *And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him?*

Why was it that when His manhood arrives and now He is about to begin His ministry and at the conclusion of Luke 2:52 it says [52] *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man?* Could have Joseph had anything to do with it for it also says in Luke 2 that when Jesus had left the temple He went back to Nazareth and was submissive to His parents? The same parents that had taken Him to the temple and the synagogue to be taught also taught Him in the home and He was submissive to them. Why was Joseph doing all that?

The New Testament explanation is found for you in Ephesians 6. Before we look at Ephesians 6 I want to sum up what we have learned in our first three studies. First we have reaffirmed the Biblical definition of the family. Yes we handle single parent homes, broken homes and all those things in the body of Christ with grace and truth but here is what we focus on. The family Biblically defined is one man, one woman, united in the covenant of marriage with parental responsibilities for their children, whether the children have been taken in through adoption or biological blessing of reproduction within the home. Is this not a glorious time to anticipate not only with manhood under assault and fatherhood under assault, while as much as that pains me because of what it does to a culture and a people that occupy it, is this not an unbelievable time to develop men of God who know how to be fathers? Would that not stand out with clarity? We are at this stage of returning to the pagan definition of family which our forbearers were liberated from, from the Gospel. Is this not a glorious privilege for the church of Jesus Christ to disciple Godly families who stand with truth and grace, with clarity and love, with conviction and compassion?

So as we aim to develop such families with that Biblical definition would then lead us to teaching the essential practice of Biblical parenting. I believe this with all my heart. I am not saying this to keep my job. Briarwood does not have a church to give me a job. I'm here to do a job and the elders, deacons and staff, are here to do a job. We have all taken covenant vows of membership to do our jobs out of love to Christ in the body of Christ and one reason for this is effective Biblical parenting is only achievable with Christian parents. This is an impossible task apart from having been supernaturally saved by the grace of God. These Christian parents insistently bring the church to their home by intentionally bringing their home to the church. They don't play drive-by church. They don't put the church on hold to find out what the schedule of life is. They bring their home into the church and their church into the home. That is what Mary and Joseph did. It was their custom. It was the habitual practice of their life to produce a son who would grow in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man.

If that essential practice is to be embraced then what would the Biblical parenting look like? 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. I know parenting has many dimensions to it but essentially parenting is evangelizing your child based upon the promises of God that have been given to you and then discipling your child with a Christ-centered Biblical world and life view so that the life style would reflect their love to Christ which is in their heart. I want to build on this in this study but that's where it starts.

I want to remind you that parenting works. I will show you why and how in just a moment. A large percentage of children who leave the church, go to college and don't come back to church is documented by the national survey of religion and youth. These children are children of parents who played drive-by church and they are just doing what their parents did. Parenting works – good parenting get good results, bad parenting get bad results. I had the privilege to be a part of the Gospel Coalition and one of the things that was sent out from that organization was astounding. They did a study of the kids that do remain in the church of Christ after college. They found out three things. One, they were converted. They had been evangelized. Two, they had been disciple. They had been equipped. Three, they and their family had been embedded in the church of Jesus Christ. They were engaged in the body of Christ.

So where do we start? I would suggest that we start with parenting. I want to navigate you back to Joseph just for a moment. Why did Joseph move all over the place in Jesus' first five years of life? What was Joseph doing bring Jesus from adolescence to manhood? I believe it is two very simple phrases. Biblical fatherhood as represented by Joseph is simply that he was guiding and he was guarding. That is what fathers do. They are equipped to guard and to guide. If you come to kill my child and I get warned, I'm going to guard my child if I have to go to Egypt. I have a betrothed who has been chosen to give birth with a virgin birth, then I will guard her. Not only will I guard, protect and take care of her but I will also guard and protect our child. When I find out that the son of the man who tried to kill him to begin with is now killing more then I'll go up to Nazareth and not only am I going to guard my child but I will guide my child. I will guide my child on the eighth day to get circumcised and on the fortieth day for presentation. I am going to guide my child to manhood as He comes to the temple at 13 years of age so that He is growing in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man. As a father I'm going to guide and guard and that's why Joseph moved, brought home what he learned in the temple, taught, brought people home that he saw in the temple and into the synagogue.

So how is Joseph accomplishing this? 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."* [4] *Fathers, (you do this in a complimentary relationship with your wife but you're responsible) do not provoke your children to anger (by being absent or being ruled by anger of man), but bring them up in the discipline (both positive and negative) and instruction (you are their number one teacher) of the Lord.* You are not their only teacher for your wife is also their teacher. Proverbs 31 says that the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. Children, listen to the instruction of your mother but you, father, are responsible for that which is to be taught to your child. The foundation of this passage or its guts you will find back in Deuteronomy 6.

Let's look at Deuteronomy 6. Here in the Pentateuch as the people are ready to possess the land and strong people are born into the family and therefore he makes a clear declaration about what is to take place. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 says [4] *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* [5] *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* [6] *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.* [7] *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.* [8] *You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.* [9] *You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

I want to walk through this text which is the structure of Ephesians 6 to raise your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This is the how-to for fathers but again you're not the only teacher. Make use of youth pastors, Sunday school teachers, VBS teachers, spiritual uncles and aunts, the body of Christ and your extended family. Certainly a father and mother have to bring team teaching because both bring something distinctive in the leadership and teaching of the child. Having said this, a father is responsible to pull the trigger to move forward in this endeavor.

Before I get there I want to remind you of something. This is about an impossible task. The child you were given at birth or you hold at baptism is physically living but spiritually dead. Now you are called to speak to their heart and their heart is at enmity against God. So how can you do this? In the last study I shared with you that you have five power plants that God has

given you for this impossible task. Power plant number one is the Word of God. The Word of God is powerful – living, active, powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, dividing the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Secondly, from the Word of God you have its central message, not its only message, which is the Gospel and that, is also powerful. I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Thirdly, you have the Holy Spirit in you and in your home and that sets your children apart. They are not saved but they are set apart. I Corinthians 7:14 it says because of the presence of the Holy Spirit your children are holy and set apart. So you have the power of the Holy Spirit to be the witness of Christ to your child. Number four, you have the unstoppable church of Jesus Christ that the gates of hell cannot prevail against. Fifthly, you have that marvelous weapon of prayer. The effective prayers of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16). Those are your five power plants.

Do you remember your five objectives? Your objectives as father when you're teaching, guiding and guarding is number one, you're evangelizing your child. You don't want to raise a Pharisee but you want to raise a Christian. You don't want someone who is just molded to Biblical practices but who knows Christ personally. Then your second objective is to disciple them with a Christian world and life view to educate and equip them. Thirdly, you are to embed them in your family, in God's family, His church. You want them embedded in the church of Jesus Christ. Fourthly you want to prepare them to leave you and cleave to another. My generation didn't do this. We so created the idolatry of children. Have you ever wondered why that four-fold paradigm is there? The four-fold paradigm is wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man. It is there because you raise a child to wholly (holy) leave you emotionally, socially, spiritually and physically. Your fifth objective is the four-fold paradigm. You want to raise your child with wisdom, stature, favor with God with spiritual disciplines and devotions and favor with man, know how to treat others with respect and love.

With those objectives and power plants, now fathers let's walk through this. I want to give you a download of Deuteronomy 6 with five statements. The first statement is you with a father's heart must be devoted to the Lord to guide the hearts of your children to the Lord. I love this phrase in Deuteronomy 6:4 which says [4] "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* Let me give you the Hebrew word for 'one.' It is *ehad*. There are two Hebrew words for the word 'one.' One Hebrew word means single. The other Hebrew word for 'one' means one with multiplicity, one with plurality. That is the word that is used in Deuteronomy 6:4. It doesn't have the Doctrine of the Trinity in it but it accommodates the Doctrine of the Trinity. *Ehad* was the same word used to describe the grape that bent the pole when they returned from the Promised Land after spying it out. It wasn't a 700 pound grape but it was a cluster. It was a *ehad* grape, a grape with multiplicity, with plurality to it.

You have One God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, now what about you Father? Let's look at the next verse. Deuteronomy 6:5-6 says [5] *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* [6] *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.* So your heart must love the Lord to guide your child's heart to love the Lord. Are there exceptions to the rule? Absolutely for God does it all the time but for a father, my first job, if I want to lead my children to the Lord from their heart, is that my heart must belong to the Lord.

Secondly, for my heart to be given to the Lord, God's Word must be intentionally embedded in my heart. Men, I'm trying to challenge us so don't get mad at me. If your child came to you and said "Dad, what does it mean to be born again?" Do you know where to take

them? “Do you know what it means to be a Christian husband?” Do you know where to take them? “Dad, can you tell me about the Lord’s Supper?” “Dad, can you show me where the Doctrine of the Trinity is in the Bible?” “Dad, why do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?” Where would you take them to answer those questions? You do have a couple of choices. One is to say you don’t know and give them the pastor’s phone number or here is this elder’s phone number or staff person’s phone number. That is fine because we are there to help but what does it mean for a dad to sit down and open the Scriptures and say “Son, look here” because the Word is embedded in your heart. Thy Word have I hid in my heart (Psalm 119:11).

The third statement is God’s Word from your heart is to be taught to the hearts of your children. The text says these are the marks of a teaching ministry from a father, united with a mother, aimed at the heart of children. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 says [6] *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. [7] You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. [8] You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. [9] You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Here is what he is saying in this text. You need to teach their hearts to your heart intentionally and systematically. Seriously consider the children’s catechism and the shorter catechism. I know it hasn’t been recent published or considered groovy but I don’t know anything that beats it. It teaches doctrine, the Lord’s Prayer and the Law of God. These are the three elements of discipleship, fulfilled through the Great Commission. It just lays it right out. So you do it intentionally and systematically.

Secondly, you do it in life. When you rise up, sit down and walk by the wayside you do it in life. Thirdly, you do it in all of life. You show your child your relationship with Christ is not simply a Sunday morning thing. It’s a life style. It’s not perfect. It’s growing. It’s maturing. Son or daughter, I’m not where I ought to be. I am growing but my desire is my relationship with Christ would penetrate and permeate all of life. That means you teach them in your house. Teach them when you sit down in the house. Then teach them when you take them out of the house. When you see the mountains tell them about the day the Lord made mountains and the valleys, the days of Noah. Tell them when they see the rainbow about God’s gracious promise to all of humanity. Talk with them when they see a TV program what these people are really teaching for all have a world and life view. There is no such thing as mindless entertainment for if you think so they’ll have your mind. This brings us to the fourth thing.

Fourthly, teach them to embrace the Word of God and the God of the Word personally. Tell them, I can’t believe for you. You must personally from God’s Word come to Christ.

Fifthly, God’s Word saturates your going out, your coming in and your staying put. God’s Word is to be everywhere in my life. If you come to our house you’ll find Bible verses everywhere. The Word of God is just all over the place but it’s more than that. It means that the Word of God is there when you sit down to eat, when you go out, when people walk into your house they’re confronted by God’s Word as you love them which is shown by the way you loving live and share it. God’s Word is what we feast upon and what nourishes us. By the power of the Spirit of God we are going to God’s Word. I cannot send the Holy Spirit but I can open the Word of God and it is the Spirit who gives life. Your words are spirit and life. God’s Spirit always works with His Word. So if I pray for the Holy Spirit and open up the Word then I have brought the work of the Spirit of God into my home and all around my home from the doorpost to the bedpost, from the upstairs to the downstairs. It is to penetrate everything from

the going out to the coming in so that my child will be brought to Christ and then disciplined to have a Christian world and life view which is framed by the Word of God, fixed on Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

So where does this lead us in a takeaway? Here is the takeaway to fathers. Fathers, what are Moses in Deuteronomy 6 and Paul in Ephesians 6 saying? The Word of God needs to be incarnated into your life and heart. Then it needs to come through your mouth in instruction. Then you and your family through your leadership are identified with the Word of God. I almost used the word integration but you don't integrate God's Word into your family, you infiltrate everything into your family. God's Word by the power of God's Spirit, pointing to Christ in the power of the Gospel and with prayer you want the Word of God to become like a dye in the fabric of a cloth. You want it to penetrate and infiltrate everything.

So what do you need to do? Men, I love you. If you want you can dismiss this as a pastor in his flight of fantasy but oh for the day where men would rise up and number one prioritize their relationship with Christ and decide I'm going to be a Christ follower. I love Him who loves me. Because I love Him I want to keep His commandments. I want to exalt Him and not just when it feels good, but in all of life. I even want Him on the days I feel bad to instruct my feelings with His presence. Secondly, prioritize your relationship with your wife. Children are not the reason for your unity. They are the result of your unity. Develop your unity in the Lord and parent your children together. That means you need to develop the unity of your relationship together. In other words, I want to be blunt here. Don't come tell me you love your children if you won't love your wife. Love your wife, the wife of your youth and then with her love these children with God's Word and the power of the Gospel.

Number four, prioritize time with your children individually and as a family. I do not believe the number one way to prioritize time with your children is to involve them in 38,000 sports leagues. I have nothing against sports for I grew up and played them but you have to recognize that you live in a culture that doesn't play sports but sports play us. It totally controls the schedules of families. All of our children are not going to grow up to be professional athletes or make all American whatever. They need to grow up and know Jesus. They need to know you. They need to know the Lord's church. So I want to challenge you to spend time with your children individually and then spend time with your children together. Fathers, date your daughters. Take your sons out with you. If you take trips then every time you can, take a kid with you. You are constantly finding a way to show them they are a part of your life.

I will never forget this. One of the greatest times in my life happened to me in the fifth grade. I'm sitting in class near the girl with the pig tails who you utterly despised because she utterly despised you and she came to the door. She said "Ms. Green, Ike Reeder has to come to the office." I knew I had done something wrong it was just a matter of which one it was they found out. I was headed down to the office and as I turned the corner I saw my dad in the principal's office at 10 in the morning. I thought "I'm dead." The teachers and administrators were always right and I was wrong. Then I found out that my dad had checked me out. My dad had two series of games in Chattanooga and he put me in the car to take me with him. I spent almost an entire week and got to shake hands with Johnny Bench, Pete Rose and ate with my dad after each game. I never forgot that. I loved it when my dad took time to throw the ball around with me in the backyard but I loved it more when my dad took me into his life and then would say when we walked into a ball park "This is my son."

Take the time with your children not to idolize them but to know them that they can know you and they can see God's Word in your life. Take your daughters out so they can know

how a man is supposed to treat a woman. Take the time with your sons and daughters together as a family and individually. One of the greatest moments in my family's life was our time in God's Word and took time to prioritize family worship. Make it simple. You don't need to come up with 13 point sermons and 7 takeaways. Read a passage, tell your children what you think it means and aim it at the youngest one. Sing a chorus together. Pray together as a family. Pick a time when you're always together as a family. Ours was at 9:30 on our bed and it still happens to this day but we had to get a bigger bed. It also happened every Sunday night after worship. We would ask them what they learned, what happened last week, what will happen this week? That was my one excuse to eat pizza and find out what was happening in their lives.

Take the time to have family worship. Prioritize it. Make it simple. Make it accessible. Make it consistent. Then take the time to be with your children individually and then together. Then prioritize your engagement in the worship and disciple making ministries of your church. Men, if you do that then here are the five things you are in your home before your children. You are to be a model of God's Word that is on your heart. You are to be a mentor, teaching your children. Luke says in Acts 1 that the first volume was all that Jesus began to do and teach. The first volume was the Gospel of Luke. The second volume was Acts. I believe the order of words are important in Scripture. My view of discipleship of my children was always teach and do and then all of a sudden I saw in the Scripture that Jesus did and taught. Jesus prayed and then His disciples said 'teach us to pray.' It is do and teach. Be a model then teach. Then minister to your children to frame them and form them with your guidance. Fourthly, manage your household well. Five, motivate your children.

I will come back to this but I have to end this now. Have you given your child a Kingdom vision for life? That doesn't mean they have to be a transcultural missionary. That's not what I'm saying. Have you given your child a life worth living, a Kingdom vision for life, a life that embraces the Kingdom of God and all of its glory? Be a model. Be a mentor. Be a minister. Dads, manage your household well and motivate your children. Point them to the greatness of God so that they might see what great things God will do to them and in them. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. I know this is so much material and so many things to cover. Bless these Your people as they work their way through it. Bless dads as we embrace this and grow step by step as fathers. Thank You so much for Your kindness because we have faltered in so many ways so many times but I thank You that You not only forgive us but grow us and you do the same thing for each and every dad that knows You. Father, we want to be like You. We want to raise up our children the way You raise us up, with grace and patience to challenge us, correct us and to give us direction so that our children are not provoked to the anger of man but they are propelled to Christ and His Kingdom. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.