

Christian Parenting

Week 2: Bringing Your Children to Faith in Christ

I. The Highest Priority in Parenting

A. Christ: What would it profit a man...?

***Mark 8:36-37 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?
Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?***

Question: What good would it be to gain the whole world, yet forfeit the souls of your children? What would you give in exchange for the souls of your children?

B. Parental Responsibility

Some wrongly say: "Do not teach your children; they will be converted in God's own time if it be his purpose, therefore leave them to run wild in the streets," will certainly both "sin against the child" and the Lord Jesus. We might as well say, "If that piece of ground is to grow a harvest, it will do so if it be God's good pleasure; therefore leave it, and let the weeds spring up and cover it; do not endeavor for a moment to kill the weeds, or to sow the good seed." Why, such reasoning as this would be not only cruel to our children, but grievously displeasing to Christ. Parents! I do hope you are all endeavoring to bring your children to Christ by teaching them the things of God. Let them not be strangers to the plan of salvation. Never let it be said that a child of yours reached years in which his conscience could act, and he could judge between good and evil, without knowing the doctrine of the atonement, without understanding the great substitutionary work of Christ. Set before your child life and death, hell and heaven, judgment and mercy, his own sin, and Christ's most precious blood; and as you set these before him, labor with him, persuade him, as the apostle did his congregation, with tears and weeping, to turn unto the Lord; and your prayers and supplications shall be heard so that the Spirit of God shall bring them to Jesus." Charles Spurgeon, "Children Brought to Christ and Not to the Font"

Children sanctified= set apart to the Lord

1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

BUT children MUST BE CONVERTED

Burden on parents to evangelize

Limits: we cannot bring our children to Christ!!!

C. Biblical Data: 2 Timothy, Ephesians 6

D. Present Situation: Parental Responsibility Delegated?

1. Bring 'em to church
2. Short cut: "Decision for Christ" ... "Pray a prayer," "Feel a feeling"
3. Early baptism

Note: we are very careful about early baptism!! We are well aware that we are possibly committing one error (not baptizing a truly regenerate child) to avoid another (baptizing an unregenerate child). But we believe the first error is rectified in time – for the truly regenerate child will grow to be a truly regenerate youth and then a truly regenerate adult. Somewhere along there, they will be led by the Spirit to be baptized when they are ready and the church is ready. But the damage of the second error is greater.

For us: the question is not, "Can a very young child be truly regenerate?" but rather, "How can the church, standing on the outside looking in, receive a 'credible confession of faith'?" Children aim to please their parents, and they will pray any prayer the parents want them to pray. The person must be able to understand and resist the world's scorn/persecution because of the word (Matthew 13:21), and children growing in Christian homes are shielded from that at an early age. A person must feel the temptation caused by the world's mocking of our faith and resist it. Children are blissfully unaware of it.

See the "Appendix" on child baptism at the end of this document.

II. Parental Responsibilities

Richard Baxter: "I do verily believe that if parents did their duty as they ought, the Word publicly preached would not be the ordinary means of regeneration in the church, but only without the church, among practical heathens and infidels."

A. Prayer

Job 1:5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

Charles Spurgeon (on the responsibility of parents to pray for their children): *How can we bring children to Jesus Christ to be blessed? We cannot do it in a corporeal sense, for Jesus is not here, "he is risen;" but we can bring our children in a true, real, and spiritual sense. We take them up in the arms of our prayer. I hope many of us, so soon as our children saw the light, if not before, presented them to God with this anxious prayer, that they might sooner die than live to disgrace their father's God. We only desired children that we might in them live over again another life of service to God; and when*

we looked into their young faces, we never asked wealth for them, nor fame, nor anything else, but that they might be dear unto God, and that their names might be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We did then bring our children to Christ as far as we could do it, by presenting them before God, by earnest prayer on their behalf. And have we ceased to bring them to Christ? Nay, I hope we seldom bow the knee without praying for our children. Our daily cry is, "O, that they might live before thee!" God knows that nothing would give us more joy than to see evidence of their conversion; our souls would almost leap out of our bodies with joy, if we should but know that they were the children of the living God. Nor has this privilege been denied to us, for there are some here who can rejoice in a converted household. Truly we can say with the apostle Paul, "I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the truth." We continue, therefore, to bring them to Christ by daily, constant, earnest prayer on their behalf. ... (from "Children Brought to Christ and Not to the Font")

Charles Spurgeon (on his own mother's prayer for him): *Then came a mother's prayer, and some of the words of a mother's prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is grey. I remember on one occasion her praying thus: "Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ." That thought of a mother's bearing swift witness against me, pierced my conscience and stirred my heart. This pleading with them for God and with God for them is the true way to bring children to Christ. (from "Children Brought to Christ and Not to the Font")*

1. Pray daily for your children's conversion, if they have not yet trusted Christ
2. Pray daily for your children's discipleship and growth in Christ if they have
3. Pray through the list of "Marks of regeneration" later in this document
4. Pray for the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23) to develop in their hearts
5. Pray against the "acts of the sinful nature" in Galatians 5:19-21
6. Pray for spiritual protection from the evil one (Ephesians 6:10-19)
7. Pray for the development of godly habits: prayer, Bible reading, worship, church membership
8. Pray for them to be warriors for Christ against their own sinfulness... to put sin to death by the Spirit
9. Pray for their future lives: consecrated fruitful service to Christ, character, spiritual gifts, spouses, children

10. Pray that they would love God with all their hearts, souls, minds, strength... and their neighbor as themselves... all by the power of the Spirit

B. Comprehensive Bible Teaching

2 Timothy 3:15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Acts 20:24-27 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me-- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. 25 "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. 26 Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

1. All the Scripture together teach the gospel message
2. Constantly saturate their minds in the Word: Old Testament history, Mosaic Law, psalms, Proverbs, Prophets; Gospels, Acts, Epistles, even Revelation!!
3. Be God-centered in all your teaching... "What does this passage teach us about God?"
4. Preach the Gospel of Christ constantly: "Yes, honey, the people in this story did a very bad thing. And we all have sins in our lives. If it weren't for Christ, we would all have to go to hell. But God sent His Son to die in our place, so that we could go to heaven."
5. Day after day, week after week... let the river of Scripture shape their worldview
6. Explain each passage and make it clear
7. Use a catechism to organize central theological truths in their brains

C. Evangelism: Sensing God's Work in the Heart

1. Constantly preach Christ to them
2. Saturate them in the Scriptures that teach the Gospel
3. Give them a constant sense of the "realm of the Spirit"... that all matters are done before a Holy God before whom we must all give an account
4. Teach them the Law of God, so that their pride may be subdued

5. Lay openly before them the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell
6. When their hearts are sensitive to the Spirit, encourage them greatly to trust Christ

D. Role Modeling

2 Timothy 3:14-15 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

1. Let them see your love for God in your prayer life... let them “catch you praying”
2. Let them see your love for God’s Word in your daily devotional life and constant conversation
3. Let them see your love for worship in your attitude about Church and in daily hymn singing and words of worship
4. Confess sin to them when needed (i.e. when you’ve sinned openly in front of them by arguing or unchristian behavior)... let them know that you see yourself as a sinner saved by grace

Parents: If children do not see your joyful obedience in Christ on a daily basis as a matter of your way of life, you will be greatly hindering them from coming to Christ!

E. Family Worship

Genesis 8:20, 9:1 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.... Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.

Genesis 12:7-8 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

F. Active Church Life

“Worship is the most valuable thing a human can do. The cumulative effect of 650 worship services spent with Mom and Dad between the ages of 4 and 17 is incalculable.” John and Noel Piper, “The Family: Together in God’s Presence”

1. Children will pick up more than habit from you concerning church involvement... they will also pick up attitude
2. Children who say their parents “shoved religion down their throat” obviously did not consider “religion” a sweet thing... no one needs to “shove” ice cream down any child’s throat
3. Children should be included as much as possible in all areas of church involvement
4. Church should not be structured in a way that naturally divides families

G. Discipline as a Means to Repentance

1. All of a child’s sin should be disciplined with the goal of bringing the child to repentance
2. Thus all sin should be seen to be sin first and foremost against God Almighty, the Holy Judge of the World!
3. There should be a cumulative sense of guilt before God that eventually causes the child to cry with Paul: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ!!!” (Romans 7:25)
4. Grace and forgiveness should always be given in the light of the finished work of Christ on the cross

III. How to Lead Your Children to Christ

A. Understanding Your Children

1. Don’t Underestimate Them
 - a. disciples’ attitude vs. Jesus’ attitude

Mark 10:13-16 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

- b. a child’s value... same as any human being!!

Psalm 127:3 “Children are an inheritance from the Lord”

Why was Jesus “indignant” when the disciples refused to allow the parents to bring the children?

Luke 12:6-7 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God.7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Children have immense value because they are created in the image of God!!

c. a child's capacity for learning deep spiritual truths

Puritan catechism

d. a child's advantage over an adult

Look again at Mark 10:13-16 "the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." And "Anyone who will not receive the kingdom like a little child will never enter it."

C.E.F. President: "We spend so much effort in evangelism getting an adult to be humble, submissive and teachable like a little child... and the little child is already there!!"

Matthew 11:25-26 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

d. conclusion: Bring them to Jesus!! Welcome them!!

Mark 10:14 "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them...!!"

Mark 9:36-37 He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

2. Don't Overestimate Them

a. they are sinners... original sin

Psalm 51:5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Romans 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Proverbs 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

"Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered: he wants what he wants... his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncle's watch, or whatever. Deny him these and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He is dirty; he has no morals, no knowledge, and no developed skills. This means that all children, not just certain

children, but all children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their self-centered world of infancy, given free reign to their impulsive actions to satisfy every want, every child would grow up a criminal, a killer, a thief, and a rapist.” Police Study in San Francisco on Juvenile Delinquency, cited by Jim Elliff

b. they are children... immature

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.

Ephesians 4:13-15 ...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Hebrews 5:12-14 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Because children are immature, we need to begin with milk and advance little by little to meat

Because children are immature, they need to be trained gradually and patiently, and constantly urged to make progress spiritually

3. Need for Conversion

a. conversion required because of sin

b. all people must “repent and believe”

Acts 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

c. even children must be “born again” and “cross over from death to life”

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

John 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

B. Understanding the Gospel

God Man Christ Response

Death & Resurrection of Christ

Justification: Just as if I'd never sinned, just as if I'd kept the law perfectly

Talk Constantly with Children About Repentance and Faith in Christ

C. Understanding Conversion

Change, turn, radical transformation

“Repentance”: turning from sin

“Faith”: turning to Christ

Praying the prayer is not essential... it is fruit

No great accomplishment to get a child to pray a prayer

Can a Child Be Converted??

Always been accepted that children can be converted

Has not always been accepted that we can know for certain that children have been converted (The faith must be tested in order to be proved genuine)

Is a “profession of faith” enough? Evidence of life is important

D. Way to Life or Way to Destruction: Broad and Narrow Gates

IV. Marks of Regeneration

A. Instantaneous Transformation: “Born Again”

B. Life with Christ Follows

C. Marks of Regeneration

1. Love for God
2. Love for Christian brothers/sisters
3. Growth in obedience to God's commands
4. Love for God's Word
5. Growth in hatred of sin/evil
6. Actual temptations refused, increasing victories over sin
7. Growth in good deeds done in service to God & others
8. Perseverance in times of trial and testing
9. Growth in discernment between true and false doctrine
10. Internal testimony of the Holy Spirit that we are God's children

D. Three Types of Assurance: Romans 5:1-11

1. Reasoned Out in the Mind
2. Worked Out in the Life
3. Poured Out in the Heart

Appendix:

Statements Related to Child Baptism

- Because child conversion is so important, child baptism is so important (to both parents and pastors alike)
- Thus there can frequently be too much emotion in discussing this issue
- False motives for baptizing children too early are very damaging: these include parents desire to "get their kids saved" but thus dealing too lightly with sin; and churches desire to maximize baptismal statistics
- The greatest danger of too early baptism is false assurance given to an unregenerate person

- The second greatest danger is the loss of a standard of regenerate church membership and the subsequent pollution of the local church
- “Rebaptism” is a very common issue among those who were baptized too early
- Baptism should be administered only to those who can make a creditable profession of faith in Christ
- A creditable profession of faith in Christ can be completely verbal, as in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch; by testing the words, a pastor can know whether or not an adult should be baptized
- However, creditable profession of faith in children is much more difficult to discern, since they are not so skilled with words and can merely parrot back things they have been taught
- Nearly everyone in Baptist life is uncomfortable with some level of child baptism, especially in the very young
- Children are different than adults, as shown by Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 13, “When I was a child, I thought like a child,” etc.
- Children do not have to “count the cost” as much as adults, especially in the case of Christian homes, in which Christian faith is strongly enjoined
- Baptismal regeneration is unscriptural; no one is saved by water baptism, and the failure to receive water baptism does not negate genuine faith
- Children MUST be evangelized and CAN come to genuine faith at an early age
- Churches ought not to have set age levels or policies concerning baptism, lest they begin a mindless machinery that is difficult to control; also because such an age limit is not taught in the Bible
- Rather, parents and pastors and church members should study the marks of a genuine work of God in the soul and apply these to each case individually
- There is no long range harm in waiting on baptism for a child’s profession to be proven out by more mature evidence
- Christians should act in charity toward each other on this issue, since it is a gray area, a “debatable issue” (Romans 14)