

## Parenting is More than a Formula Ephesians 6:4

### I. Introduction.

- A. Children are a great blessing and a great responsibility. Ps. 127:3-5
- B. Parents are seeking answers.
  - 1. Various formulas have been offered – education, child training, church programs.
  - 2. Most of the formulas have both strengths and weaknesses.
  - 3. Parents who have tried each of these approaches have experienced various results.
  - 4. Many parents go from formula to formula looking for *the* answer. Ecc. 12:12

### II. Parents need to exercise discernment when examining child training formulas.

- A. We need to be good Bereans when considering various parenting formulas. Acts 17:11  
Eph. 4:14 | 1 Thess. 5:21
- B. Many ‘Christian’ approaches to parenting are legalistic. II Tim. 3:16-17 Pr. 30:6
  - 1. It is very important to distinguish between what Scripture commands versus one of many possible ways to fulfill our responsibilities to God.
  - 2. Some make their particular methodology “law”, while failing to acknowledge that other approaches are equally valid ways to fulfill biblical commands.
  - 3. Sometimes the extra-biblical rules (traditions) become more important than what Scripture actually teaches. Mark 7:8
  - 4. Extra-biblical formulas often fail to take into account legitimate differences between kids and between families
  - 5. When the system fails it does not mean that Scripture has failed.
- C. What the Bible teaches about parenting is really quite simple. Eph. 6:4
  - 1. Discipline them – control behavior. Pr. 13:24 22:15 23:13-14 29:15 Dt. 21:18-21
  - 2. Instruct them – aim at the heart. Deut. 6:4ff Pr. 22:6 1:8 4:1 6:20-23 Gen. 18:19 Ex. 12:26ff 13:8,14.
  - 3. Don’t provoke them to anger. Col. 3:21
- D. What is not biblically mandated is a family choice.

### III. Why do kids turn out the way they do? Three factors:

- A. Parents are responsible to raise their children properly. Eph. 6:4 Col. 3:21
  - 1. God blesses faithful parents. Prov. 23:13-14
  - 2. Unfaithful parents suffer grief – learn from Eli and David. I Sam. 2:12-17,22-25,29 3:13 4:11 2 Sam. 13 | Kings 1:5-6 Pr. 20:20 30:17 17:21,25 29:15 19:13 Ex. 21:15,17
  - 3. What about Proverbs 22:6? Prov. 10:4
- B. Children are responsible for the choices they make. Pr. 20:11 Ezek. 18:5-13
  - 1. Our children are born with a sinful nature. Ps. 51:5 Pr. 22:15
  - 2. What was the difference between Cain and Abel? Gen. 4:1-9 Mark 7:18ff
  - 3. Israel, like Cain, rejected God’s discipline. Jer. 2:30 5:3 7:28 Isa. 1:2
  - 4. As our children enter adulthood, they are responsible to make their own life decisions. Prov. 1:21ff 20:11,20 30:11,17 9:1ff Ezek. 18:5-13 Eph. 6:1-3
- C. God’s sovereign grace is needed to save our kids. Eph. 2:1ff John 3:1ff 6:37,44

#### IV. Beware of parental determinism.

- A. Some parenting formulas are unbiblically deterministic, promising results if you carefully follow their system.
  - 1. All failure is blamed on your failure to follow the formula (keep the law).
  - 2. If outcomes are determined by parental influence, then does God pass our parenting test? Ex. 4:22 Isa. 1:2 Gen. 4:6ff
- B. Deterministic parenting formulas can lead to pharisaical pride, as if we can save our kids by our good works and faithfulness.
  - 1. Parents are divided into successful winners and unsuccessful losers.
  - 2. Those who have problems with their kids (losers) are tempted to anger or despair.
  - 3. We all are incapable of perfectly keeping the law.
- C. Moralistic formulas can also create kids who are little Pharisees, with the outside of the cup looking clean while the inside of the cup remains filthy. Mark 7:6,18-23

#### V. Parents and children need the gospel.

- A. Many parents bear an incredible burden of (false) guilt.
- B. The law alone will not lead to parenting success – neither we nor our children can be saved or sanctified merely by the law. Col. 2:23
  - 1. Parents desperately need the gospel.
  - 2. Our kids can only be saved by the work of God – they cannot be saved by our works or theirs.
- C. We need to incorporate the gospel into our parenting. Eph. 6:4
  - 1. Discipline – their sin shows their need of the gospel for forgiveness and change. Ro. 3:20ff 6:1ff Gal. 3:24 I Pe. 3:18 John 15:5 II Co. 5:17
  - 2. Instruction – show them how redemption in Christ permeates the Bible. Luke 24:47 Deut. 6:20-23
  - 3. Don't provoke them to anger – our sinful failures gives us opportunity to admit our daily need for forgiveness and transformation in Christ
- D. The three uses of the law in parenting.
  - 1. The civil use – because our children are born sinful and foolish they need outward restraint through discipline. Prov. 22:15
  - 2. The evangelical use – our children's sinful failures provide wonderful opportunities for us to show them their need of the gospel. Gal. 3:19-24
  - 3. The normative use – once our children profess saving faith they should want to express their love for the Lord by obeying His commandments. John 14:15 Titus 2:14

#### VI. Conclusion – God is at work in our lives through our parenting. II Co. 12:9-10

- A. We want to look upon parenting as a means to display our strength.
- B. God uses our parenting to display our weakness so that we might utterly depend upon His strength – our ultimate hope must be in God, not our kids. Jer. 17:5-8

## Discussion questions

1. What are some parenting formulas you have tried or considered?
2. What are some examples of legalism in parenting formulas?
3. What are three basic responsibilities of parents according to Scripture?
4. What factors actually determine how our children turn out?
5. What are some examples of parental determinism?
6. Why is parental determinism unbiblical?
7. How does parental determinism lead to pride in some parents and children?
8. How can parental determinism lead to despair in some parents?
9. How can we incorporate the gospel into each of the three aspects of parenting?
10. How does God work in the lives of parents through our children?

## VII. Other Resources.

- A. Verses Dealing with the Heart of Sin in Children. Mark 7:20-23 Mt. 15:17-20
  1. Obedience/Talking Back. Ex. 20:12 21:15,17 Dt. 21:18-21 Eph. 6:1-2 Col. 3:20
  2. Quarreling. Js. 4:1-2 Pr. 15:1 17:14
  3. Lying. Eph. 4:25 Acts 5:1-11 Col. 3:9-10 Pr. 12:19
  4. Name Calling. Matt. 5:22 James 3:1-10
  5. Anger/Vengeance. Mt. 5:21-22 Rom. 12:17-21 Pr. 25:28 14:29 16:32 Ps. 37:8 Js. 1:19-20 Eph. 4:26-32
  6. Tattling/Slander. Pr. 17:9 18:8 19:16 26:20-22
  7. Evil Companions. Pr. 1:10-19 I Cor. 15:33
  8. Evil Entertainment (Music, TV, Films). Eph. 5:3-7 II Co. 10:5 Ps. 101:3
  9. Need to Confess. Pr. 28:13 I Jn. 1:9
  10. Need to Forgive. Mt. 6:14-15 18:15-17,21-35 26:24-26 Eph. 4:32 Heb. 12:15
  11. Envy. Pr. 14:30 23:17 24:1,19 Js. 3:14-16
  12. Laziness. Pr. 6:6-11 12:24 II Th. 3:10
  13. Stealing and Restitution. Num 5:6-7 Eph. 4:28 Ex. 21:28-36
  14. Misuse of Substances. Pr. 20:1 23:20-21,29-35 I Co. 6:19
  15. Pride/Humility. Pr. 6:16-18 8:13 11:2 15:33 16:19 22:4 29:23 Phil. 2:1-11 I Pet. 5:6-7 Js. 4:6
- B. The folly which is bound up in the hearts of children.
  1. They reject wisdom and instruction. 1:7 15:5,14,20 1:7,22,32 10:8 18:2 30:11,17 20:20
  2. They don't show proper respect to their parents. 19:26 30:17 15:5
  3. They choose foolish and wicked companions. 13:20 14:7 22:24
  4. They talk too much. 12:23 13:16 15:2 18:7,2 13 29:11,20
  5. They are proud and boastful. 14:16 28:26 27:1-2
  6. They justify their sin. 12:15 28:24
  7. They are self centered. 18:2
  8. They are quick tempered. 12:16,18 14:17,29 29:11
  9. They argue and quarrel. 18:6 20:3 26:4-5 29:9
  10. They enjoy mischief. 10:23
  11. They mock at sin. 14:9
  12. They are stubborn and unreliable. 17:10 26:6
  13. They flatter and manipulate. 29:5
  14. They are lazy. 10:5
  15. They lie. 12:22 26:18-19
  16. They steal. 28:24
  17. They are foolish with money. 14:24 28:24.
  18. They are attracted to immorality. 7:22 29:3
  19. They are attracted to intoxicating drink (drugs) and gluttony. 28:7 23:29-35
  20. They aren't teachable. 15:5 18:2 28:26

- C. Twenty-five ways parents provoke their children to anger (from Priolo).
1. Lack of marital harmony. Genesis 2:24 Heb. 12:15
  2. Maintaining a child-centered home. Pr. 29:15 II Ti. 3:1-2
  3. Modeling sinful anger. Prov. 22:24-25 Js. 1:19-20 Mt. 5:21-23 Ro. 12:1f Ps. 38:1
  4. Habitually disciplining while angry. Ps. 38:1 Gal. 6:1 Heb. 12:5-10 I Th. 2:3f
  5. Scolding. Eph. 4:29
  6. Being inconsistent with discipline. II Co. 1:17-18 Ecc. 8:11
  7. Having double standards. Phil. 4:9
  8. Being legalistic. Mt. 15:8-9
  9. Not admitting you are wrong and not asking for forgiveness. Mt. 5:23-24 Js. 5:16
  10. Constantly finding fault. Job 32:2-3 Pr. 19:11
  11. Parents reversing God-given roles. Eph. 5:22-30
  12. Not listening to your child's opinion or taking his/her side of the story seriously.  
Prov. 18:3,17 20:5 Eph. 4:25 Js. 1:19
  13. Comparing them to others. II Co. 10:12
  14. Not making time just to talk. Js. 1:19 Pr. 20:5
  15. Not praising or encouraging your child. Rev. 2-4 I Co. 1:1f Col. 3:21
  16. Failing to keep your promises. Mt. 5:37 Ps. 15:4 Col. 3:9
  17. Chastening them in front of others. Mt. 18:15
  18. Not allowing enough freedom. Lu. 12:48 I Co. 13:11
  19. Allowing too much freedom. Pr. 29:15 Gal. 4:1-2
  20. Mocking your child. Job 17:1-2
  21. Abusing them physically. I Ti. 3:3 Num. 22:27-29
  22. Ridicule or name calling. Eph. 4:29
  23. Unrealistic expectations. I Co. 13:11 I Th. 2:11
  24. Practicing favoritism. Luke 15:25-30
  25. Child training with worldly methods instead of God's Word. Eph. 6:4 Pr. 3:5-6

D. Recommended reading:

1. Tedd Tripp, Shepherding a Child's Heart
2. Lou Priolo, The Heart of Anger
3. Paul Tripp, Age of Opportunity (Parenting Teens)
4. Bruce Ray, Withhold Not Correction
5. Newheiser and Fitzpatrick, You Never Stop Being a Parent
6. Fitzpatrick and Newheiser, When Good Kids Make Bad Choices
7. Newheiser, Parenting is More than a Formula
8. Klumpenhouwer, Show Them Jesus: Teaching the Gospel to Kids
9. Machowski, Old Story New: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God
10. Machowski, Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God
11. Lloyd-Jones, Sally, The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name