

## "The Key Work of Parents" 694

Thanks to Bruce Goettsche Via the Internet

Text: Deuteronomy 32:45-47 Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel, and He said to them: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe--all the words of this law. "For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess."

Most likely the last words of Moses.

Introduction:

A. There is perhaps nothing more challenging than being a parent and also nothing more rewarding.

B. Yet, there are few tasks in our life we have less preparation for.

C. Children do not come with an instruction book.

D. Let me give you some tongue in cheek wisdom:

- The law of heredity states that all undesirable traits come from the other parent
- You don't need a remote control for your television...if you have children, the chances of controlling anything are already remote.
- If you don't want your children to know what you are saying, pretend you are talking to them.
- More ominous than the sound of an approaching riot is the sound of children suddenly quiet.
- There never was a child so lovely but his mother was not glad to see him asleep."  
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)
- If your wife doesn't treat you as she should, be thankful

E. Though funny . . . this advice isn't much help in the serious business of raising our children for the Lord.

F. This morning I want to talk seriously about raising our children. I am assuming three things:

1. We all want to be good parents
2. We all feel we could be better parents
3. We want our children to grow up knowing the Lord

G. In our text this morning: Deut. 32:46 we get some clues to raising our children.

1. We see the importance of having a heart felt faith and the importance of training the heart of our children.

2. This morning I want to share with you ideas that I wrestle with myself.
3. When I was younger I knew a lot more about raising children than I do today.

Before we can understand what we should do we must look squarely at the way we currently function.

## **I. Wrong Motives for Child Rearing**

A. Let me give you a simple fill-in-the-blank question: WHEN MY CHILDREN GROW UP I HOPE THEY WILL BE .....

How would you answer that question. Let me suggest six possible answers and perhaps we will see ourselves.

### **B. TO BE A PERSON WHO HAS OBEYED THE GOSPEL**

1. Certainly each of us wants our children to come to true faith in Christ. But understand that simply obeying the gospel is short of our goal
2. If our press is constantly to "obey the gospel" our kids will learn very quickly that the way to get mom and dad "off our backs" is to be baptized and be done with it.
3. The Bible warns us in two places: In Matthew 7: 21-23 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!
4. We can go through the motions and still have a heart that is far from Him. Another warning in Matthew 21: 28-32 But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.
5. The key is not what we say . . . . but what we do. Our goal should not be just to have our child obey the gospel, it should be to develop a heart for the true and living God.

### **C. Want my Child to BE SUCCESSFUL**

1. We all want our children to achieve great things. It is important to set goals and strive for them.
2. However, when we want our children to be successful we are often guilty of using the world's definition of "success". According to the world you must:

1. Not let others get in your way (yet the Bible, tells us to "serve one another" (Gal. 5:13) and "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Phil. 2:3,4)

2. Do whatever you have to do to get what you want. (Yet the Bible tells us to "do everything to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31)

3. Our children can grow up thinking that the thing that should drive their lives is the world's acclaim. (Yet the Bible says, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?" Mark 8:36)

4. It is O.K. to be successful but we must make sure that we are operating not by the definition of success given by the Fortune 500 but the definition that comes from the Word of God. Success for the believer is to stand before the Lord and hear his "Well Done!"

#### **D. Want my Child to BE POPULAR**

1. Each of us has seen the sad eyes of our children when they were excluded from something their friends were doing.

2. We ache when our children hurt in that manner. We want them to have friends.

3. An undue desire for our children to be popular however can have devastating results,

1. We develop an undue emphasis on appearance (value is our looks rather than our heart. This leads to a superficial view of life). This can also lead to Anorexia and other eating disorders.

2. We end up buying things we can't afford and our children do not need so that our children are wearing the "official attire" of the group.

3. We push our kids to over involvement to be "with the crowd"

4. We end up teaching our children that God is the Opinion of the Group. The fact is a child that has a heart set on God will sometimes be unpopular.

### **E. Want my Child to be Smart**

1. I believe in the importance of education.
2. However, when we push our children to get grades, grades, grades we push them toward a superficial prize.
3. Surveys show that children freely admit that they would cheat if they thought they could get away with it and it would get them a better grade. Has our push toward grades has led to dishonesty.
4. We are telling our kids that a good education will give them a great advantage. However, we fail to mention that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"!
5. Are we are raising children to believe that they should trust their intellect, their ability to "figure it out" rather than trust God!

### **F. Want my Child to be Self-Confident**

1. This of course is the battle cry of today . . . "self-esteem".
2. We certainly want our children to understand the dignity that is theirs as a child of God.
3. However, we hear phrases such as: "You've got to believe in Yourself", "You can do whatever you set your mind to do". These are phrases that sound a lot like Isaiah 14:11-15
4. Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, And the sound of your stringed instruments; The maggot is spread under you, And worms cover you.' How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: `I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.
5. This press for self-esteem can push our children to one of the most devastating forms of idolatry - self-worship.
6. We want our children to believe in themselves but even more we want them to believe in God!
7. We don't want them to believe they can do anything they want, but that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil. 4:13

## **G. Want my Child to be Well-Behaved**

1. This is the motivation for much of our disciplining of our children. (Another large part of discipline is motivated, sadly by our anger.)
2. We teach our children how to "play the game". We forget that good behavior does not necessarily mean a good heart.
3. However, is our motivation for them being well-behaved because it will look bad on us if they are not. "Didn't your mother ever teach you anything?"
4. Discipline involves a lot more than punishment and it must be consistent.

## **II. Principles To Help Us Develop a Godly Heart**

### **A. We must check our own heart**

1. Before we talk too much about training the heart of our children we must look at ourselves.
2. Do you want to see something sobering?
  - a. Look around you at a basketball game that is a hard fought game.
  - b. Go to any school sports activity in a close game and watch how people act. Listen to the things you say!! "Nail that Guy!" or "What's Wrong Ref, Born Blind?" We act in ways that betray all that we profess.
  - c. Yes, we should play to win. However, the question is, "Who defines 'win'"? (Last year at the Male Manuel football game) When Male won in the last minutes of the game a whole group of Manuel fans stood up and flipped them the bird)
  - d. What do you children hear from you as you drive the car or deal with the neighbor?

The passage from Deuteronomy has the order right, "*Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law.*" (Deut 32:46) We begin by taking the words to heart ourselves . . . THEN we can teach them to our children.

3. So, here's the question: Are you serving God with your heart or are you just playing the game? Are you committed to Christ, or are you just acting religious?

### **B. We must repent of the false motives of our life**

1. Think about what we have talked about and ask, "do any of these things describe the way I live my life?" If so, change direction.

### **C. We must weed out the mixed messages of our lives**

1. Singing about grace and forgiveness but holding a grudge against a friend or family member
2. Telling our children to "get along" but being in conflict with others
3. Talking about trusting God but staying up all night in anxiety
4. Talking about the joy of the Lord but constantly complaining
5. Talking about love and respect and then tearing people apart with our gossip

### **D. We must begin treating our Children with the Love of Christ**

1. Sadly, we are usually much more kind and considerate with people outside our family. This should not be.

2. Our children need to hear us ask for forgiveness without hearing us say, "but when you \_\_\_\_\_ you make me angry" (we're not sorry....we're blaming).

3. Our children need to experience, grace, kindness, compassion and love from their relationship with us.

## **III. How to Develop a Godly Heart in our Children**

### **A. We must be consistent in our discipline**

1. We must change the way we think about discipline. Disciplining our children is not to be a matter of punishment or coercion it is a matter of training. We must discipline not just when it is convenient or "when we can't stand it any longer", we must discipline when it is needed.

2. Our goal is to teach our children the proper boundaries of life. We are teaching them to live with our authority so that in the future they will know how to live under God's authority. Discipline is an act of love, not anger.

### **B. We must learn to show Biblical reasons for our directives**

1. We tell our children they should clean their rooms. It's not because we "can't stand it any longer" (come on....you've said it too).

2. We want them to clean their rooms because we want them to view their possessions as gifts from God which are to be gratefully received and taken care of.

3. We tell our children not to fight with each other not because "they are driving us crazy", but because the Bible commands us to be "Kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven us."

4. We tell our children to do their "chores" not because we "aren't their servants" (for in one sense we are) but because we are told that we should live responsibly. "He who does not work, shouldn't eat." We are to do "everything as unto the Lord".

5. We tell our children to remain sexually pure not simply because they "may get pregnant" or "they might contract AIDS or some other Sexually transmitted disease (which is a real danger). We urge them to be sexually pure because God has called us to purity. We need to explain that God tells us that the best relationship is the one where we can give ourselves completely to another. God understands (and so should we) that every time we are intimate with someone we leave a part of ourselves with them. God wants us to still have "all of us" to give on our wedding day.

6. We urge our children to be well-behaved, not because they might embarrass us. We tell them this is a way to show respect and honor to other people.

### **C. We must open the Scriptures with our Children**

1. I can't give you a formula for how to do this. You have to find that for yourself.

2. But we must expose our children to the way God thinks and what He considers to be important.

### **D. We must pray fervently for the heart of our Children**

1. We must pray that God would turn the hearts of our children to Himself.

2. We must pray fervently that God would capture their hearts . . . and while we are on our knees, we need to pray that He would capture our heart as well.