

Christian Parenting *Ephesians 6:1-4*

Good morning.

I read a story about two little boys who were walking home from Sunday school where they were taught a lesson about the Devil.

One little boy asked the other, “*What do you think of this devil business?*”

“*Well,*” replied the other boy, “*You know how the Santa thing turned out, how he’s really your father.*”

Please open your Bibles to *Ephesians 6*,

In second service today we will have several children dedicated to the Lord so, we are going to talk about something very dear to the heart of the Lord, the family.

God’s design for forming society from the very beginning of time was through the family unit. God has a structure for how life is to operate. If we follow His will, we will be blessed.

If we decide we know better than God when it comes to *how we should live*, then this life will become a struggle.

I. Be a parent who listens well.

Read *Ephesians 6:1*

The Lord has put our children under our authority to obey and hear all they need to know about the Lord.

This is a good reminder for children, parents, and all of God's children as well.

The word "**obey**" means to *hear under*. It also means to listen intently, to heed to, to conform to, or a command from authority.

According to *my Jewish learning*, the Shema is considered the most essential declaration of the Jewish faith. Young Jewish children would learn these truths from a very young age.

Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

Deuteronomy 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 6:8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

Deuteronomy 6:9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. NKJV

Children can quickly pick up on all the things we talk about and again, we speak most about the things we are passionate about.

If we want our children to have good listening skills, we must first realize listening is a **learned** behavior.

If we expect to teach our children to be good listeners, we must model good listening, in order for them to imitate us.

*How much time do we as parents **actually** spend listening to our children?*

If we added up the actual minutes in a day we speak with our children, I think we would be shocked, when we compare that, to the amount of time we devote to other, less important things.

What dominates your time? Is it social media, smart phones, internet, TV, sports....

As followers of Christ, we must give priority to the things which really matter. Here is the priority list the Lord gives to us:

1. Jesus Christ must be first and **foremost** within our lives.

In *Deuteronomy*, the Lord is calling us to be passionate for Him.

Deuteronomy 6:5 And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

Jesus repeated these verses within the Greatest Commandment given in *Matthew 22*.

Matthew 22:37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

Matthew 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

Matthew 22:39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Matthew 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." NKJV

We are to ***Love the Lord with all of our heart*** because true love is an act of our will, not our emotion.

Christ followers place their **affections** on Him above all else.

We are to ***Love the Lord with all of our soul***, and our soul represents our whole life.

The way of the flesh is to live for self, a life unto me, and to serve me. As we love the Lord with all our souls, we love Him with our whole life, for Him, unto Him, while serving Him!

We cannot have the abundant life if we do not have Jesus on throne of lives, directing us.

We are to ***Love the Lord with all of our strength***.

This is a life whose energy is fully devoted to Christ. We cannot compartmentalize our lives and think we are pleasing the Lord.

The only way our life can be lived for the Lord is allow the Lord to work in us to have true love for God and our neighbors.

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. NKJV

Our Worship is supposed to be for God alone, and He must be our deepest love as well as our source for every other love.

2. Spouses must be placed **ahead** of children in the family.

Your children need to see how a successful, godly marriage operates.

If your spouse is not treasured and placed in their rightful place within a marriage, children will believe marriage isn't important.

On the other hand, if our children see us honoring our spouses and place them in the right position in our lives, children will feel love and security by that example.

Feelings of romance in a marriage also happen as our spouse realizes the importance we feel towards the relationship, because they are second on our priority list, only under the Lord Himself.

When a spouse feels treasured and secure in a marriage, most times, they will respond with love and affection.

Genesis 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. NKJV

Then for the first time since creation in ***Genesis 2:18, And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." NKJV***

Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

John Trapp said the word *joined* means, to “*Be glued to her.*”

Chip Ingram said, “*Both Adam and Eve were emotionally and psychologically naked, vulnerable and open to one another.*”

Adam and Eve had oneness, which is true intimacy -- emotionally, physically, and spiritually. (Ingram)

Children who are placed above a spouse within a family are out of sequence and they tend to become **self-centered**.

When a child is placed in the wrong position on a priority list by a parent, they can grow up with an unrealistic view of self.

Children start to feel entitled and think they are somehow owed something because they were wrongfully placed into a position in the family and made to believe they deserve special treatment.

If we put our children ahead of our spouses, when they grow up and move out, as a couple, we can find ourselves roommates with our spouse and no longer interact with them as partners.

3. The Lord wants us to pass our **passion** for Him down to our children by always talking about Him.

Deuteronomy 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. NKJV

Being a godly, listening parent is the most important task God has called you to, as we raise our children.

When this life is over all of our financial accomplishments will mean absolutely nothing!

But the legacy you can leave within your children, grandchildren and so on...will have eternal value.

God first asks parents to listen and obey and then He tells them to **train** up their children to do the same.

If a parent won't listen or follow the authority that God has placed over them, they will end up with a Monkey see, Monkey do situation from their children.

Children are mirrors and reflect how you respond to the Lord.

- Children watch how we listen and obey the Lord.
- Children watch how serving Him is a priority in our lives.
- Children see if going to church is a priority.
- Children watch how we live Monday-Saturday.

Do we send our children mixed messages about our walk with Christ?

II. Parents need to communicate honor.

Read *Ephesians 6:2*

Honor is similar to **respect**. The word **honor** comes from the root word for value or worth.

Honor literally means to prize, or to fix a valuation upon; by implication, to revere and **value**.

Honor means to consider others and their opinions as valuable.

But here again, children are mirrors, and honoring others is a learned behavior.

If your children or grandchildren are consistently hearing and seeing disrespect from you towards others; deep down inside they will disrespect you as well.

If we desire genuine respect from our children, it will begin with us parents respecting others around us.

And then notice the result...

III. When we do things God's way, it works out.

Read *Ephesians 6:3*

God has a structure for how things in life are to operate. If we follow that structure, we will be **blessed**. If we decide we know better than God, life becomes a struggle.

Obedience to the Lord always leads to blessing. *Why?*

Because the Lord wants to bless His children, so He clearly teaches us the way, and so by obeying His call, it always leads to blessing.

Remember back in *Exodus*, how the Lord revealed Himself to Moses and told him to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt.

Moses was told to take the Children of Israel to the Promised Land of Canaan.

Some estimates say this walk could have been as little as a six to an eleven-day journey but, it took the Children of Israel 40 years of wandering, because of their rebellion and unbelief.

The Hebrew people had a negative mindset and would not trust the Lord. They were ungrateful, fearful, whiny, and idolatrous.

When we do not do things the Lord's way, we will wander **aimlessly**. Instead of making it to the Promise Land, we will suffer needlessly in the desert.

Charles Stanley said, *“When you choose to obey the Lord, He will bless you. This is because obedience always leads to blessing.*

I have always told people who say they do not understand why God is asking them to do a certain thing that if they will obey Him, He will reward them with a sense of peace and joy that compares to nothing this world has to offer.

Therefore, set a goal to obey the Lord and watch Him work in your life.

Because the Lord knows what the future holds, He calls us to obey and when we obey, it always leads to Him blessing us.

IV. Our home should be an encouragement center.

Read *Ephesians 6:4*

“Do not provoke” or exasperate. Do not push our children into **rebellion**.

You see the opposite of exasperate, is to encourage!

I read an article by Hope Wilbanks which talks about some ways we can encourage our children...

a. "Job well done!"

So many times we give our children responsibilities, like chores, but forget to let them know when they've done a great job.

Our children need to hear those words of encouragement, especially from their parents, when they've done a nice job.

b. "Thank you!"

Just as they need to hear when they've done something good, kids also need to hear their parents say thanks, too.

Hearing that positive reinforcement will make them proud of the good things they've done, and excited to do even more.

c. "I understand."

Too often kids turn to their friends or peers with their problems.

Many kids simply stuff their feelings and problems deep down inside and don't talk to anybody about what's bothering them.

Sometimes a kid just needs a parent who is willing to listen and be understanding.

Simple understanding provides the encouragement a child needs to learn how to problem-solve.

d. "I'm sorry."

Believe it or not, apologizing to your child can be very encouraging.

When your child can see you be willing to be humble enough to apologize for something you did wrong, they'll know that it's okay to make mistakes, as long as you learn from them.

e. "I was wrong."

Despite what you might think, your children also need to know that you aren't right all the time.

They need to know that adults don't have all the answers either, and that sometimes you do or say things that are wrong. When you're wrong, admit it.

f. "I love you."

No matter how young or old your child is, they're never too old or young for you to tell them you love them.

Tell them how much you love and appreciate them.

Your love will provide the encouragement they need in those crucial moments of sadness or discouragement.

g. "I'm always here for you."

Your children need to know that you'll always be there for them, regardless of what they have done.

It provides encouragement for them to reach out to you, instead of lying or hiding things from you.

It also lets them know that your love is deeper than anything else in this world.

h. "Let's have some fun!"

Finally: One of the best ways to encourage your child is to get out with him or her and just have some **fun**.

V. Our home should be a training and education center.

Ephesians 6:4 but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. NKJV

Our children need training and discipline with both **positive** and **negative** corrections.

Think about a star athlete for a moment, who needs regular training to make corrections to improve their game.

The word ***training*** is a systematic form of spiritual teaching, which means teaching spiritual things on purpose.

Admonition = Instruction; a place in the mind.

Romans 15:14 I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. NKJV

Instruction should include both teaching and warning, from love and understanding. “***Not provoking our children to wrath.***”

Do our children learn the correct spiritual lessons from us?

VI. Our home should be a worship center.

Ephesians 6:4 “Of the Lord” NKJV

The key is to teach our children and train them to have the **same attitude** of Jesus.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

Philippians 2:6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

Philippians 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. NKJV

If every Christ follower had the same attitude of Jesus, imagine the impact we would have not only on our children, but the impact we could have on our world.

But we know every person will one day have to make their own personal decision, whether or not to commit himself or herself to the Lord at an age where they can understand it for themselves.

If we want to pass on an effective Christianity to our children, we must model a contagious Christianity.

Worship is showing God how much He is worth to you.

We model how much Jesus is worth to us by our attitudes!

We must live Jesus loud! We must die to ourselves and allow the Holy Spirit complete control over ourselves.

Faith is passed down parents...***Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. NKJV***

Question: *How do I model authentic Christianity to my children or others around me?*

Let's be Christ followers that show others what it means to live out an authentic Christian life.

Not one of perfection, but a life where we are, as *James 1:19* says, "***So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath***". *NKJV*

Jesus is the Grand designer of life and His last words to us were:

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." *NKJV*

Let's teach others around us what it means to be Christ followers by the way we live! **Live** Jesus loud!

Second service only! So, as we get ready to dedicate these children to the Lord, let's discuss what a child dedication means.

Let's have all of the families come on up...

The word "dedicate" means to set aside or commit to a sacred purpose. This dedication this morning means these parents are committing their children to the Lord and His purposes.

This the same idea Hannah had, when she lent Samuel to the Lord in *1 Samuel 1:24-28* as a baby. In one sense, this is what every Christian parent does while dedicating them to the Lord.

We know every person will one day have to make their own personal decision, whether or not to commit himself or herself to the Lord at an age where they can understand it for themselves.

Dedicating a child to the Lord, is really a matter of parents dedicating themselves to the Lord in order to raise the child in a godly home, with the Lord Jesus Christ as the Center.

With that in mind, we see two primary purposes for dedication:

1. For these parents to be joined by their church community, to celebrate the birth of their child, joyfully thanking God for this new addition to the family and to our fellowship.
2. For these parents to commit themselves publicly to raising their child in the nurture and love of the Lord, and for the church to pray for them with their responsibility as parents.

These parents should take seriously their responsibility to raise all of their children with a strong spiritual foundation with Christ as the center.

These parents should be committed to having their children in church, and even more importantly, to making Jesus a part of their daily lives.

And we as a church are pledging to pray for these families as they raise their children.