

Biblical Parenting – Teaching and Shaping

Material adapted from GSM Biblical Parenting Course, Used with permission.

Seven reasons children need parents who are spiritual tutors:

1) Children are sinners.

- *The intent of man's heart is evil from his youth.* (Gen 8:21)
- *The wicked are estranged from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth.* (Ps 58:3)
- *I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.* (Ps 51:5)

You must teach your children to obey Your kids will be good at disobedience; you won't have to teach them that They are experts in it from the very beginning. But obedience is something they must learn. (114)

2) Their thinking is inherently foolish (Prov 22:15).

Children do not know what is best for them to eat, when to go to bed, where they should sleep, or what to wear.

3) They do not have the skill of discerning the consequences of their behaviour (Gal 6:7).

4) They tend to love ignorance rather than knowledge and wisdom (Prov 1:22).

5) They incline toward spiritual laziness (Prov 6:6-11).

6) They tend to trust self rather than God (Prov 3:5-6).

7) The gospel is not intuitive knowledge—it needs to be taught (Matt 28:18-20).

Honey bees instinctually know how to build the perfect hexagonal shapes that make up a honeycomb, but the gospel is not intuitive or instinctual knowledge for a child. They know that God exists (Romans 1), but they don't know about Christ and His death and resurrection in their place.

Ephesians 6:4: God's Basic Commands to Parents

Bring them up ...

bring them up (The verb is a present/continual, active imperative)

Parenting is *active*:

Children are not self-rising flour: they need the yeast of parental instruction to grow up properly. Children naturally follow the foolishness in their hearts; therefore, parents are pumps, pushing the water uphill, reversing the child's natural, sinful, foolish inclinations.

The mental aspect of bringing up:

in the discipline and instruction of the Lord

Definitions: *discipline* and *instruction*

The two words are "more or less identical in meaning" (Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 798)

- *instruction/admonition (nouthesia)*:

To place something in the mind, to exert influence over a child's thinking.

The affective aspect of bringing up:

- *discipline/training (paideia)*:

The educational process of raising and teaching a child: *Instruction with teeth in it*. It is instruction that bites if you don't pay attention.

Parents are not only to inform the mind, but to shape "the heart".

That is, parents are not only to give a child information, but shape a child's inclinations, desires, longings, and affections.

A child's "worldview" is his overall sense of what matters, what is important, what should be pursued. These are a child's loves.

Romans 1 makes this idea fairly clear. Once the grid of ultimate devotion to God was abandoned and replaced with a grid of idolatry, mankind became increasingly deceived in his perceptions of the world.

because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools (Ro 1:21-22).

J. Gresham Machen put it this way: "...[I]t would be a great mistake to suppose that all men are equally well prepared to receive the gospel. It is true that the decisive thing is the regenerative power of God. That can overcome all lack of preparation, and the absence of that makes even the best preparation useless. But as a matter of fact God usually exerts that power in connection with certain prior conditions of the human mind, and it should be ours to create, so far as we can, with the help of God, those favourable conditions for the reception of the gospel."¹

Notice what God calls for in Deuteronomy 6:6-9:

"You shall teach them" – verbal instruction. We need to actually be taught what Scripture teaches. In formal times and informal times, in unplanned moments and planned moments, in times of correction and in times of celebration, our children should be getting "God's perspective". How does God see this? What does God want? What would please God? Why did God allow this, or make this, or give us this? What is most important?

"Shall be in your heart" – example. We need to love the things we want them to love. We must desire and thirst for what we long for them to have. We then model the habits, behaviours, thinking, reactions, and attitudes that they absorb. They learn our priorities, our desires, our hopes and fears,

1 . *The Princeton Theological Review*, Vol. 11, 1913, 7.

our longings. They learn by how husband and wife treat each other, by how parents speak to the children.

“When you sit in your house...” – routines. Our lives have rhythms. These rhythms and repeated actions teach the child what our lives are about. They begin to understand what life revolves around, what is a daily, weekly, monthly or yearly act.

“Sign in your hand” – rituals, acts of devotion. When we partake in certain symbolic acts, these are some of the most powerful moments for shaping the mind. Some people only see these in rare moments: weddings, funerals. But when we symbolise ultimate realities with special acts, a child’s worldview is powerfully shaped.