

Parenting Successfully

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

►Preface

Like so many things in life, we have adopted the world's way and abandoned the Biblical instruction for parenting. The result has been a tragic disaster.

We live in a society where 1 in 4 unborn babies are aborted. Currently, for every 1,000 babies born in the US, there are 246 aborted. This means these unborn babies are literally sucked from the mother's womb and discarded, unwanted, unloved and trashed. Some additional statistics:

43% of women having abortions identify themselves as protestant.

27% of women having abortions identify themselves as catholic.

75% of women having abortions indicate the primary reason is that having a baby will interfere with their plans for work, school and life.

95% of abortions are performed by curettage which involves suction.

Less than 3% of all abortions are medically related.

48% of women having abortions have had previous abortions.

You may be thinking, "Well that is elsewhere in society but not in our community." The statistics may be less in our community but it is still a problem. Furthermore, it is this same society that influences our children, youth and young adults.

Why talk about abortion on baby dedication day? The reason is that I want you to see just how dimly our society views children and life. And, I want you to contrast that to what God's Word tells us about children.

If you love God and if you love your children, you owe it to them to seek God's Word for instruction on biblical parenting. We will only scratch the surface today concerning this matter. However, in the coming days our church must take a strong leadership role in expounding God's way for Christian parenting and living.

►Read Text Deuteronomy 6:4-7

"⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Deuteronomy 6:4-7(NIV)

"⁶Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

"³Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. ⁴Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. ⁵Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." Psalm 127:3-5

Prayer

►Introduction

Illus: When Pam and I were expecting our first child, we happen to be working together in the same office. Everyday, a friend by the name of Jim would come by to deliver appraisals. Jim and his wife had 2 children. Jim would always ask about Pam and as he was leaving he would remark, "Your life is never going to be the same." Several months after Austin was born, I said to Jim, "You should have hit me up side the head and said, "Listen to me, your life will never be the same!" As straight forward as Jim's daily comment was, it was an understatement.

Most new parents see having children as giving up some of their time and adjusting their life for a temporary period of time. If you have children, you know differently. You now know that having children changes your life. Forever!

This is not to say that it changes our lives negatively, it just changes everything. In recent months I have come to the realization that I will have concerns for my children for the rest of my life.

With all of that said, our children are an enormous blessing to our lives. In a day when 25% of unborn children are aborted, God's Word is still clear. Children are a blessing and a reward from God. (Psalm 127:3-5)

God's Word teaches that children are the fruit of the body; a gift from God. I have come to realize something very powerful. Children are God's way of allowing us to participate in His creation.

This is a responsibility that we must not take lightly. All of us desire for our children to be smart, popular and successful. However, more than anything else, our desire should be for our children to be godly. Our primary goal in parenting should be to insure our children become believers and pass the good news of Christ to generations to come. Our text makes this clear. It is God's command that we impress His Word upon our children.

In other words, parenting should be done with a purpose. Parenting must be intentional, effective and according to God's instruction. Parents are entrusted with children to raise-up godly offspring. Life is sacred and the responsibility of parenting is sacred business.

I would like to share the three most important things you can do as parents. Please make no mistake about it; I am speaking to fathers and mothers equally.

I. Love God with all your heart

The single most important thing you can do to be successful parents is to love God with all your heart. Our text today says, "*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*"

Last week, I concluded the sermon with the question, "Is Christ Nothing to you; something to you or everything to you?" What if someone were to ask your children that question about you? What would your children say about your relationship with God? Would their answer be, "My daddy loves God with all his heart?" Would their answer be, "My mommy loves God with all her heart?"

You will never be perfect parents. I have never seen perfect parents. However, your children will find the most meaningful things in life through your love for God.

Loving God with all of your heart means:

- a. **Having a clear idea of the importance of God in your life.** Just where does God fit into your life? Where does God fit in relation to your career, shopping, hunting, fishing, sports and the like? Why do so many fathers love sports but apparently do not love God?
- b. **Obedying His teachings in every aspect of your life.** Are honesty and integrity just words with you or principles by which you live? Do your children understand that these are not your moral values but values instilled through faith in Christ? You can't be dishonest with your own sinfulness and expect your children to understand Christianity.
- c. **Attending worship and fellowship with God's people.** When one loves God with all of their heart, he or she does not attend church 1 out of 3 or 4 Sundays. I am sorry but that is just an obvious fact. I understand people miss church occasionally, but many Christians attend seldom if not rarely. What do you think this tells your children about your love for God?
- d. **Praying for guidance in every area of life including parenting.** When we truly love God, we seek His counsel concerning everything. Why do people have such a difficult time praying with their spouse and with their children? I believe Satan makes us feel guilty and unworthy. We must find the courage to pray with our family. Our children must know where we go to for answers to life's challenges.

Powerful teaching is not ultimately about the teacher's techniques or the teacher's sayings but about the teacher's heart. Our children are impacted by the things we truly devote our lives to; the things we love.

Children don't always listen to their elders but they almost always imitate them.

II. Love your spouse with all your heart.

Children must know that you love your spouse with all of your heart. Too often this is where many young parents begin down a slippery slope that ultimately finds them terribly far apart.

We must always remember that our children are an offspring of our love for one another. One of the greatest things that you can do for your children is to let them know that the marriage doesn't exist for them but rather they exist as a result of the loving marriage.

Too often, the mother devotes so much time to a newborn that there is no time for the husband. The husband then buries himself in his work and soon there is this gap. Fathers often end up feeling separated from the family. Children soon pick up on this gap and learn to play each parent against one another. I don't have to tell you where this gap eventually leads.

Illus: I hesitate to use my own experiences because we are in no way perfect parents. We have done some things right and some wrong. However, one thing we have done right is to let our children know through our actions that our love for one another came first and will always be at the center of the family unit.

Pam and I have strived to let our children observe our love for one another. That can be down right fun at times. You should observe the reaction of my teenagers when on occasion I comment to Pam that she looks sexy in some new outfit. You can often read their thoughts, "How can two people that old find each other so attractive?" She is more beautiful to me today than ever.

Children need to have the solid foundation of knowing their parents love one another and that their parents are going to stay together. This means we must honor the marriage covenant. We must remain committed to one another through the difficult times.

Illus: A long time ago when Pam and I were newlyweds, I heard someone say, "Most of the time your love keeps the marriage together but, some of the time, the marriage keeps the love together." That is such a true statement about commitment.

Young parents need to understand that everyone has trouble in a marriage. If anyone tells you they never argue, they are either a liar or they have their head in the sand. Marriage is not always easy. Society says, if your spouse doesn't make you happy, divorce them and find someone who will make you happy. God designed marriage to be a man and a woman for life.

I know there are extreme circumstances where divorce is perhaps unavoidable. However, in every case, it can be avoided if the both partners are committed to God and committed to one another. Let go of the past and remain committed to the marriage. Make up your mind you will never, never, never give up. Seek God and godly counsel and He will honor your marriage.

Illus: Martin Luther, the famous Protestant Reformer once said, "Let the wife make her husband glad to come home, and let the husband make the wife sorry to see him leave."

Give your children the greatest gift possible, parents who love one another for life.

III. Love your children with all your heart

It would seem to go without saying that we must love our children with all of our heart. However, in today's society of self centeredness, many parents take their focus away from what is best for their children toward their own ambitions. How else do we get to an abortion rate of 25% and a divorce rate in excess of 50%?

Even parents who are dedicated to properly parenting their children, often find themselves feeling cheated. They often reason that they have missed great careers or opportunities. Make no mistake about it, no work anyone does is more important and honorable than raising children in God's way. There is no higher calling. There is no accomplishment more meaningful, I don't care what anyone says.

- a. **Love your children with your time.** The most important thing you can give your children is your time; yourself. When you are tempted to get involved in some energy-draining, time-consuming opportunity that will only increase the distance between you and your family, ask yourself hard questions about the price that will be paid.

Illus: My fondest memories of my children involve simple things such as fishing, hiking and bike riding. I recall when Morgan was small, she could swing for hours. If I let up with my pushing, she would say, "Swing me daddy, swing me more."

Give your children the very best of your time.

- b. **Love your children with God's teachings.** Jesus said, "*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments (John 14:15).*" This translates into a question we must ask ourselves, "Do I love the Lord and do I obey His Word?" We must teach our children to love God by obeying God's Word. As previously stated, this is taught but also demonstrated by our example.

Today in America most of the training of our children is not done by the parents and is not done by the schools. Most training is done by the television! From the television, our children get their ideas

about what is right and wrong, what is desirable and undesirable, and ideas about God, sex, marriage, family and life. This cannot be!

We must not entrust our children's training to the writers and actors of today's television.

- c. **Love your children with discipline.** Disciplining children takes the time and hard work of both parents. Some poor approaches to discipline include:

Guilty Approach - We have all seen families where one or both parents feel so guilty about working such long hours that they fail to discipline their children when they get home. These parents often deal with their guilt by showering their children with material things. If that describes you, change your work habits or your work environment. Trust God to provide for your family. They need your time and your discipline.

1-2-3 Approach - Some parents use the 1-2-3 method. When a child misbehaves, they start by warning them followed by a forceful, "That's one!" When the child continues, they proceed to "Two" and then to "Three". If you are one of those people, I want you to know that you are teaching them they can get away with things for a period of time. You are not teaching them right from wrong, you are teaching them to try it and push the limits. If you can teach them 1-2-3, you can teach them to obey to start with.

Illus: This reminds me of the family with a new cat they were house training. Every time the cat would use the bathroom in the house, they would swat it and throw it out the window. Eventually, the cat learned the lesson. He did his business on the carpet and then ran and jumped out the window.

Double Standard Approach - Some parents have two sets of standards. Some behavior is acceptable at home but not in public. If you are at home it is ok to do certain things but when we are in public, you are embarrassing me. This is unbelievably confusing to children. I have seen children get away with things at home only to get spanked when they did it in public. What matters the most in this case, parenting or public opinion?

You Handle It Approach - There are parents who let the spouse do all of the disciplining. One parent is the bad guy and does all of the correcting while the other sits back and watches. The children know they can get away with anything with one parent and very little with the other. If this describes you, you are lazy when it comes to disciplining your children. You need to work with your spouse and stop sending your children mixed signals.

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11

God's Word clearly teaches that just as God disciplines His people, we are to discipline our children. We must teach them respect and train them up in the ways of the Lord. It is not easy and it will take work.

- d. **Love your children with grace.** There are no perfect parents just as there are no perfect people. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. God has shown us grace. We must also show grace and forgiveness. As important as it is to discipline, we must also provide room for forgiveness.

Illus: I recall instances with my own children when they did things that really disappointed us. We were angry and could not believe that they would do such a thing that they clearly knew would hurt us. Even when we were discussing what strong disciplinary action we would take to insure that they learned their lesson once and for all, we were also discussing grace. We would look for the words to say to begin restoring their dignity and assuring them they could overcome their mistakes and become the person God intends for them to be. We want them to know they have done wrong but also know that we love them and forgive them.

In America, every 7 minutes a child is injured or killed by a gun; every day 100,000 children are homeless, every day 135,000 children bring a gun to school; every day 6 teenagers commit suicide; every day 2,989 children see their parents get a divorce. This doesn't even touch on the statistics related to alcohol, drugs and sexual conduct. It is very tough being a kid these days. Your children need your love.

Conclusion

Illus: As you know, my father left when I was about 5 and my sister was 2 years old. For years I did not see him. When I was in high school and on a choir tour with the church my father came to a church to hear us

and see his two children for the first time in many years. My grandmother had told him we would be there. After seeing us almost grown, he realized he had wasted his life. He quit drinking and began to work very hard to be a part of our lives. To his credit, he tried very hard. He bought my sister a car and he gave us money. We went to visit with him on occasion in Houston. However, nothing he did could make him a real father. It was too late.

You and I have one chance to get it right. There is no last minute overtime to salvage bad parenting. The right way of parenting is God's way and it takes commitment. It takes loving God, loving your spouse and loving your children.

Through God, you can parent successfully regardless of your childhood. God has done it for me and I know He will do it for you.
