

Solid Results

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

Preface

Illus: I have basically had three professions in my life. I have been a Pastor, Mortgage Banker and Computer Programmer. In each of my three professions, there has never been anything solid and tangible that could be touched. As a preacher, I accumulate sermons on a hard drive. As a mortgage banker, I accumulated files in a cabinet for each mortgage we processed and closed. As a computer programmer, I developed software for churches and some propane marketing companies. In none of these professions have I ever built anything solid that I could touch and feel. For this reason, I really like projects where I can touch and admire my work when it is finished.

Show picture of Austin's fireplace and our working on it together. This is a project my son and I worked on at his home. We tore down the existing fireplace mantle and trim. We found a piece of a maple log and used it for a mantle. We then carefully hung stone on the fireplace and hearth to create a rustic and permanent look. We are really proud of the end result. Austin and Janet got the benefits of a great looking fireplace and I got the satisfaction of being part of a project with solid tangible results that can be admired for many years to come.

But then again, there are things that are not made of rock, steel or wood but are more tangible and longer lasting. For example, the impact we make on the lives of others. How we touch others lives with our encouragement and support has a lasting impression for generations to come.

Scripture (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live

lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

1Thessalonians 2:11-12 NIV

Introduction

In our text, Paul uses the example of a father's relationship with his children to describe his relationship with the church. Through this we see the importance of encouraging, comforting and urging.

God's Word is still clear, children are a blessing and a reward from God.

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

God's Word teaches that children are the fruit of the body; a gift from God. 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.

Notice our text describes a parent as urging them to live lives worthy of God. Our primary responsibility is to teach them how to live according to the Bible.

Illus: I read a story about a young professor who had not children but gave a lecture on parenting. It was titled "Ten Commandments for Parents." After he had his first child, he adjusted his lecture and titled it "Ten Hints for Parents." A second child was born and he once again changed the lecture and the title to "Some Suggestions for Parents." Finally, he had a third child and he stopped lecturing.

I would like to share the three most important things I believe you can do as parents and grandparents.

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. The Bible says, *“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”*

What if someone were to ask your children what Christ means to you? What would your children say about your relationship with God? Would their answer be, “My father loves God with all his heart?” Would they answer, “My mother loves God with all her heart?”

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?
- b. **Obeying 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 these are moral 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. 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?

Illus: A study once disclosed that if both Mom and Dad attend church regularly, 72% of their children remain faithful to church attendance. If only Dad, 55% remain faithful. If only

Mom, 15%. If neither attend church regularly, only 6% remain faithful. This statistic shows the impact of the parents on the children and their faith.

- d. **Praying for guidance in every area of life including parenting.** When we truly love God, we seek His counsel concerning everything. 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 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: Pam and I have strived to let our children observe our love for one another. That can be down right fun at times. “How can two people that old find each other so attractive?”

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.”*

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 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, give up.

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

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.

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.

It is very tough being a kid these days. Our children need godly parents and grandparents.

Conclusion

Illus: About a year ago, I conducted the funeral of an elderly man. He had two sons and a daughter. I recently ran into one of the sons and as we were talking, he mentioned something about his father. I

looked at him sort of funning because I distinctly remember burying his father. He immediately clarified. He said, this man is my biological father but you buried my Daddy. He was the one who raised me and loved me.

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.