

Building Blocks – wk 1: The Role of Parenting

11.02-03-14

The Jesuits famously boasted: "Give me a child for the first seven years, and I will give you a man!" They understood that the easiest way to shape a person for a lifetime is to impact them while they are still young. Countless studies have cited how people are the most receptive to the Gospel before the age 18.

Jesus put children at the very center of His activity in the world. Jesus asks, do you want to enter God's kingdom? Become like little children! Do you want to be great in God's eyes? Then become like little children. Do you want to welcome and receive Jesus? Then welcome little children.

However, it's not all good when it comes to how we do with parenting and investing in the next generation... Most parents are overwhelmed and exhausted today. The most common response that Focus with the Family got from Mom's is that they're simply "tired" or feel like a "failure."

Crisis in the church: 60-88% of children who grew up in church turn away from Christ or get caught up in non-Christian religions or cults after leaving High School

Parenting is challenging. I am not an expert. Seems like God reminds me on a daily basis how badly I need help in this area. I'm doing this as a fellow learner.

Parents, not yet parents, singles not wanting to be parents (pregnancy loss support group Sun 7pm)

Goal: laying a foundation that lasts (Matthew 7:24-27 - we must build a strong foundation in our children's lives) principles over the next two weeks, how we work those principles out during the last few weeks (lots of practical application.... **ASK QUESTIONS**)

3 principles throughout the series:

1) **Jesus is the son of God and He came to provide a way for our children to know God;** Our children coming to know God doesn't depend on us. He came so we could be secure in the fact that *"God won't save our children because of our parenting even though sometimes he will use our parenting, but often times in spite of our parenting."* **There's only one perfect parent and that is God the Father**

– parents you will fail but God doesn't. The main building block of our parenting is our relationship with God the Father. We're going to explore that more today.

2) **We believe the Bible is the perfect book on parenting.** There are over 93k books right now on Amazon for parenting. It's like navigating a jungle and can be overwhelming. I believe as followers of Christ that we have the perfect guide to parenting that comes from the only perfect father, we have seen it lived out in flesh through the perfect son and it's something we all have access to.

3) **Every child is unique.** Not a one size fits all strategy for parenting. My kids are very different... every child needs a unique approach to how we train them, discipline, encourage, bless them.... This series is not going to be a cut and paste 5 steps to successful parenting! The perfect strategy to follow step-by-step... ask God to give us wisdom.

PRAY

Key Question: **What is the most important role for a parent?** What is my job? What am I supposed to do? **If you're not clear on your role, you'll never achieve your goal.**

Am I to be my children's best friend? am I to be the provider for my children? is my role to teach and instill information? Am I their coach? Primarily an encourager? should I be a dictator that demands obedience? am I to be the protector that shields them from the evils of the world?

Following Moses getting the commandments from the Lord; he tells all the people how they are to live and what they should do
Deuteronomy 6:5-9

⁵ *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.* ⁶ *These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.* ⁷ *Impress 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.* ⁸ *Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.* ⁹ *Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

#1 Job Description - to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul & strength JESUS AFFIRMS THIS IN NT; love Jesus with everything you have; allow Jesus fully to capture your desires, direction your passions and

steer the purposes of your life → **addicted to Jesus**. (addiction consumes you, defines you, try to get away from it and can't, think about it all the time, controls your life)

- make Him the center of your life - we all have something at the center of our life.

What is at the center of your life? it's what your life rises and falls upon; what defines your identity; what you look to for security, significance and acceptance.

What ever that is shapes you, forms you, gives you a worldview; you become most like that which is at the center of your life. Not sure? **What are you becoming?** You become that which you focus your life on the most. **What do you love most? What do you submit to most? What changes you most in life? What do you think about most?**

When Christ is at the center of your life, he becomes the source for your life.

The source for strength, the source for encouragement, the source for wisdom, the source for love. Sometimes people say "I don't feel very loved right now?" I ask, what was the source of your love? Where were you looking for it? If it's anything other than Christ you will always be disappointed.

What's this have to do with parenting?

You don't have everything your children need, but Jesus does. Let Jesus be your source.

We give our children what we have received our self.

Addicted to Jesus... you were born into the world, made to worship God, to put God at the center of your life. Genesis 1 says we are created in the image of God. Literally means there is a "handprint of God" on our life. There is a void, there is an emptiness in ALL of us that can be only filled with God. **We are like a lego creation that is missing a key cornerstone piece that can only be filled by God.**

- This is true for our children as well. Even at an early age you see them trying to fill their life, center their life on something. Toys... tv... superheros... books... friends... self-image... performance... sports... approval from friends or parents... boy/girl friends... sex... drugs... and countless other things to fill their life, give them identity, significance and security.

The primary way they will learn that they are created by God and to put God at the center of their life is not by memorizing Deuteronomy 6:5, **but by watching you**. Your children will learn far more from you by watching and being with you then by what you teach them through conversation or formal training

times. **With children Jesus Christ is caught not taught.**

Maybe this is the reason 60-80% of teens will walk away from church after they move out. The picture of Christ they saw growing up... boring... irrelevant... empty... add-on... powerless... secondary

Children are always watching! They learn by imitating. watching. observing. mimicking.

Video: HYPERLINK "<http://www.sermonspice.com/product/843/imitation>"
<http://www.sermonspice.com/product/843/imitation> OR Maya's question

What do your children (or those closest to you) **see when they watch you?** ?

Most people worship the creation instead of the Creator. We've rejected or ignored the truth and have decided to build our life on a foundation other than God. We're all tempted to do this. The Israelites after receiving the commandments go out and create a golden calf to worship. They start worshiping the plunder of the land instead of the plunderer. When we do this we always will be disappointed. We'll always end up not satisfied. Wanting more.

Anytime you put your hope in what has been done to you or what you do, you are worshipping the creation instead of the Creator. **When you try to make a good thing an ultimate thing it will become a distorted thing**

"I don't feel loved." What are you looking to for that love? Some part of God's creation? Another person? **The Creator says** you are deeply loved. Loved so much in fact that God sent his son to the earth to fulfill a death sentence. Loved so much that Jesus looking ahead into the future, saw your life and said you know what "Bob... Tom... Jane..." is loved so much that I will gladly give up my life so they can experience the love and acceptance of God.

Do you build your life on God or something else? **If you choose something else, God will allow you to do that.**

Romans 1:24-25

²⁴ *Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.* ²⁵ *They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.*

He will give you over to your sinful desires... one of the greatest gifts God can give... painful as a parent... *"if you don't want Me, but want something other than Me, I'll let you have it..."* for many of us that continual disappointment, coming up short, searching for more is what has led us to God.

You'll never get enough in life (money, recognition, relationships, approval, success, entertainment....) from anything but God. You'll never get enough unless you get Him.

When you try to make a good thing an ultimate thing it will become a distorted thing...

Some of you do this with your children, friends; boyfriend or girlfriend; your job.... when you do this it crushes them. Putting the creation and the center of your life instead of the Creator.

Our children need to learn make Christ the ultimate thing in their life. They won't do this by us telling them, but by watching us do it.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? 2 questions...

1) What foundation are you building your life on? Deut . 6:5-9 Let God and Jesus consume your life. Put them first and let them be the source of your joy, happiness, satisfaction, significance, purpose, fulfillment and identity.

John Piper quote:

"99% of the actions you perform that influence your children are un-premeditated. ... If this is true then your aim to influence your children to worship God demands that you pursue your own satisfaction in God. The implications of this is that we as parents should devote most of our energies to becoming a certain kind of person not in trying to master parenting strategies. If children imitate what really makes you happiest, then the priority of parenting must be to find your deepest satisfaction in God so your joy in Him spills over into what you say and do. The startling truth is if you want your children to be happy in the true God you should make it your life's passion to be happy in the true God. They don't tend to imitate what makes us miserable or bored, they tend to imitate what makes us happy. If God is not seen to be our true satisfaction it's unlikely that 18 years of church going will make them seem like God is worth much. "

2) What foundation are you building your home on?

What do your kids see is most important in the rhythm of your family's life?

Work... entertainment and distraction... gadgets and toys (iPhones, iPads,

iWatches, iMes.... isn't it interesting all the I's in the Apple products)... money... relationships... extracurricular sports (skip church for soccer every week)... These things can't be god. Don't teach your children they are by your example.

Repent. Before God... To your children...

Final thought: **Grace for parents who are exhausted or feel like failures AND parents with unbelieving spouses.**

Parents, your children's salvation and lifelong happiness does not depend on you. You were never meant to carry the ultimate responsibility for anyone's salvation: neither your own or your children's. Only Jesus is strong enough to carry and make a way for a person to be restored to God-that's his job not ours. You are NOT the savior of your children. Jesus is the Savior.

Many of us parents are exhausted because we simply don't believe that God is good enough to entrust with our children's eternity. We have far too high a view of our ability to shape our children and far too low a view of God's love and trust worthiness for them. We are not guaranteed that godly parenting will produce godly children. There are no promises in the Bible that even our best parenting will produce good children. God may use your good parenting to draw your children to Himself, but He also might use other means. Although we long to be faithful parents, we can rest in the truth that our faithfulness will not save our children. Our children will be saved only through the faithfulness of Christ working through the Holy Spirit in our children's lives. He is the powerful, soul-transforming One.

Grace for those with spouses that don't believe - no one could keep the little children from coming to Jesus... lots of examples throughout scripture of people living for God in spite of their parents:

Moses was raised by an unmarried woman who worshiped the sun

David's dad didn't even remember him and paid him very little attention

King Hezekiah the son of most terrible kings in Judah but he wasn't ruined by father's rebellion

Timothy had a mother & grandmother that taught about God but his father was not a believer

I want to encourage you to live by faith in the Son of God. Trust Him with your own life and with the lives of your children. (Galatians 2:20)

PRAY

Song: Cornerstone

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly trust in Jesus name

Christ alone; cornerstone
Weak made strong; in the Saviour's love
Through the storm, He is Lord
Lord of all

Psalm 127:1

Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.

Psalm 127:1 - totally dependent on the Lord working in our children's lives, can't do it without God -->tension)

God allows us to put anything we want at the center of our life. If we don't want to live for Him, He allows that. He actually even sets us free to allow the things of this world to consume us if that's the choice we make.

Romans 1:18-25

18 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,* **19** *since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.* **20** *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

-we all have the opportunity to know God. Creation points to God. As you look at the world and how things work it's impossible not to see God in the midst of it.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **25** They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Romans 1:31

31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. **32** Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

What about Proverbs 22:6?

*Train up a child in the way he should go;
even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Proverbs are not **conditional promises** they are **maxims** or **wise sayings**. They describe, in a general sense, the way that God has made the world to run. Plenty of examples where it's obvious these sayings don't hold true all the time: Proverbs 10:4 "A *slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.*" While it's generally true that hard work produces wealth it's not always the case.

Proverbs 31:28 about a virtuous woman "*Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her*" there are many virtuous women that have been scorned by children and husband only to be welcomed by the Lord.

If you view them as conditional promises you end up with a works based righteousness that leaves no room for grace and mercy. Faithful obedience does not always obligate God to respond in the way one desires.

Romans 1:28-30

28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. **29** They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; **they disobey their parents;**

Why do children disobey their parents? They are addicted to a false god. They have something at the center of their life that is not God. Anything we do that does not look like love, care, gentleness, caring about others, it's because we have another god controlling our life. You know why your children disobey? **1) They think they are god.** And how often do we as parents affirm it? We put them on a pedestal, center our entire lives around them, respond to every want, need, and desire and let them control our families. **2) They think you are god** because they've seen you live a life where everything centers around you. So they try to figure out ways to make you happy with them. They learn all kinds of forms of disobedience, deceit, manipulation just so they can get your love and approval. They might even look like they're obedient, but in their hearts they're rebelling. You've trained them not to worship God but you.

Statistics of Father's Influence: Study - Kids Who Become Active Christ-followers as Adults

If mom and dad went to church: 72% of kids will as adults.

If mom only went to church: 15% of kids will as adults

If dad only went to church: 55% of kids will as adults

(Dad's - don't ever underestimate the value of you leading and discipling your kids to know Christ)

If neither mom nor dad: 6% of kids will as adults.

In all the centuries since the founding of the church, parents have raised children using only the Bible, their own experiences as a child with their parents, and the spiritual community they were a part of. It wasn't until modern times with the invention of the printing presses and modern publishing that parents had access to information in publishing. As recently as the 1940s and 1950s parents didn't

invest time learning new methods to produce successful children because it wasn't until 1946 that Dr. Benjamin Spock came out with a first of its kind book called *Baby and Child Care*.

- as adults we crave information. We're always looking for the next self help book, training seminar, talk show tip to help us move forward in life. We live in a culture that is so incredibly rich in content and information, and we are hungry consumers. We think that if we just get the right information we'll achieve the breakthrough we're after.

- the cry of the human heart that doesn't get God, is "I want more."

Video: Video: AT&T Commercial - girl saying "we want more" how many of us adults live like this. how many of our children learn this from the adults in their life? HYPERLINK "<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48-tcRiBNj4>" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48-tcRiBNj4>

- Parents, some of you do this with your kids. You've put your kids at the center of your life instead of Christ. I need them to prove that I'm loved, accepted and significant; if they turn out well I'll turn out well. You try to manipulate and control them to fulfill your needs and desires. If you do this God will give you over to that... but they will never satisfy you. For some of you it will ruin forever your relationship with your children because you place such unreasonable, high, demanding expectations on them that even if they were the perfect child you would always be disappointed and want more. They are not God. Your children make lousy Gods! Parents of babies, especially if it's your first child, don't get this. They're perfect. They're amazing. The baby rules their life... until they're three... then they get demanding and terrorize your house, but because you set them up as God you build your world around them. Teach them it's all about you. Kids, you are the center of the universe. They're lousy Gods. They'll never give you what you're chasing after. You will end up trying to manipulate and control them from ever disappointing you. You'll hurt them. You'll end up crushing them. You'll destroy them... you know when you often see this, when your children become teenagers. You can tell the parents that have done this with their kids as their children are rebelling and have very strained and unhealthy relationships with their parents (not all kids... sometimes children are just rebellious)

C.S. Lewis:

The woman who makes a dog the centre of her life loses, in the end, not only her human usefulness and dignity but even the proper pleasure of dog-keeping.

The man who makes alcohol his chief good loses not only his job but his palate and all power of enjoying the earlier (and only pleasurable) levels of intoxication.

It is a glorious thing to feel for a moment or two that the whole meaning of the universe is summed up in one woman—glorious so long as other duties and pleasures keep tearing you away from her. But clear the decks and so arrange your life (it is sometimes feasible) that you will have nothing to do but contemplate her, and what happens?

Of course this law has been discovered before, but it will stand re-discovery. It may be stated as follows: every preference of a small good to a great, or partial good to a total good, involves the loss of the small or partial good for which the sacrifice is made.

. . . You can't get second things by putting them first. You get second things only by putting first things first.

Yes, he may use our parenting as a means to accomplish his purpose, but as Jonah 2:9 says salvation is entirely of the Lord.

.. trying to be the perfect parent, outperform the other parents we see on Facebook and Pinterest, following the multitude of advice, ideas and opinions we see in books, blogs and daily talk shows (192 million results on Google if you search “parenting advice”) .. begin with the first source. God who started the whole thing. Perfect dad. Created the first family. That’s where we’ll focus in this series.