

## Building Blocks – wk 2: The Goal of Parenting

11.09-10.14

Week #1 review : Role of Parenting → Christ at the center of your life (to be addicted to Jesus) “If you’re not clear on your role you will never achieve your goal.” Jesus Christ is caught not taught... children are always watching.

### ASK QUESTIONS

This week's question: **What is the goal of a parent? How do you know if you are being successful? What are we trying to accomplish?**

Deuteronomy 6:5-7

<sup>5</sup> *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.* <sup>6</sup> *These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.* <sup>7</sup> *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.*

Most parents goal: (and I find myself focusing on this a lot) is we want our kids to be good, well mannered, well behaved children that are moral, listen well, respect others, are polite and follow directions. --> **Behavior Modification**

To further control behavior we teach them Christianity is all about behavior and based on their behavior God is pleased or displeased. Taught that **God wants them to be good**, that **Jesus is sad when they disobey**, and that **asking Jesus into their heart is the breadth and depth of the Gospel**. “You’ll make God sad if you...” “God is watching you...” “God wants you to be a good little boy or girl”

**We’ve taken the gloriously liberating and life-changing power of the Gospel and taught our children that all God wants is morality.** We’ve told them that being good on the outside is the be-all and end-all of their faith.

While good morality and behavior aren't bad things and there's nothing wrong with wanting these things, these can't be our primary goal. There is something that's more important than their behavior and that's their **heart**. **Jesus didn't come to make bad boys and girls good, He came to rescue our children and change them from the inside out.**

**OUR GOAL IN PARENTING IS NOT BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION BUT**

## **HEART TRANSFORMATION.**

The heart is the control of their actions... children do what they do because of what's going on inside.

Deuteronomy 6:6

**<sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.**

Proverbs 4:24

**“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”**

Luke 6:43-45

**<sup>43</sup> “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>44</sup> Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. <sup>45</sup> A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.**

If you try to get a change of behavior without a change of heart you are training your kids to perform and pretend. To hide. To put a wrapper on the outside to please you and others. What we want with our children is real genuine fruit.

**Illustration:** Noah and Keira hitting each other... temptation is to simply get them to stop hitting each other and learn that this is wrong and inappropriate behavior... But there's also an OPPORTUNITY to see into their heart. Why do they not love their sister? Is this what love looks like? Why does anger so easily control them? Where is forgiveness?

- tempting to get them to behave right. Instead want behavior to come out of what's on in the inside. - Cringe when we get report from the teacher about our child, they embarrass us in public; cherish opportunities when they have bad fruit as it shows me there is still work to be done, still a need for their heart to be changed. **Prayer for my kids: “Don't hide from me their badness.”**

**ILLUSTRATION: Ice covered with a towel**

- Like a **MEDICAL TEST**... it shows us that there is something not right on the inside. External symptoms (fruit) show us there is an internal sickness

- **Primary desire with my children is not to modify her behavior but to bring the reality of Jesus and the Gospel to her life so they change from the inside out.**

Most children learn to conform their outward actions. Our culture is centered on behavior modification and getting children to function in society. Our schools function that way (**clip charts**), many of our parenting tools lean toward this (**potty chart** anyone?)... Many of us maybe up until this day have also parented solely based on behavior. Not saying behavior doesn't matter... to have a healthy, functioning family and society behavior is important (but it's not the most important thing.)

Here are the areas of training most parents focus all their parenting on:

1) **Initial Obedience** - concepts that will protect them from harm and begin to function within family and society. First word most kids learn “no”; also “come to me” and “stop!”) – primarily for safety

2) **Social** - as kids mature we teach social laws of our culture “please” “thank you” - differ from one culture to another (ex. hand shake – long, short, strong, weak, left, right)

- learn to socialize with other children (kids NEED interaction with other children.... Best place for that to happen is at church! Every LifeKids room is tailored to the age of the children... always two volunteers, everyone's gone through a background check... don't shelter your kids! They also will LEARN more back in LifeKids than sitting in an adult service.

If you aren't ready yet to drop off your kids... mom's room, lobby, if bring them to service be considerate and take them out when noisy... **you're more tolerant of their noise than others** are!)

3) **Civic** - taught to be law abiding citizens. Don't cheat on tests, lying is unacceptable, disobeying those in authority is unacceptable, don't hit other children just because they annoy you.

4) **Education** - reading, writing, math.... Extracurricular like music, sports, hobbies, etc.

5) **Religious** - what we teach our children as part of a life of faith before they come to faith

- ex. wait to eat until we pray before a meal, learn when to stand up and sit quietly in church, teach them to worship, expose them to the Bible, sit in wedding ceremonies

**We are to teach and train our children in each of these areas, but their obedience in these things won't save them. Only the life, death, and resurrections of Jesus Christ saves them.**

We can't stop there! Obedience in the above areas does not necessarily point to faith in Christ. **Just because children do the above well, doesn't mean they have discovered Jesus Christ and their hearts changed**.... It could be the fruit of any number of things like: **desire to avoid discipline, desire to please others, desire to feel good about themselves.**

**How are children that are good at the above any different** then how an atheist parent, Muslim parent, Hindu parent would raise their children?

I think the reason many children act like great Christian children and then when they become teenagers and leave the house, is that we parented solely on the above areas (which can cause **children to look great on the outside!**) **but never went after their heart.** Never led them to a place where they recognized their need for Jesus to transform their heart and to change them.

#### **HOW DO WE GET TO & SHAPE THE HEART OF OUR CHILDREN?**

Luke 6:43-44

**43** “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. **44** Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.”

**Determine the ROOT of our children's actions by looking at the FRUIT of our children's actions: attitudes and beliefs. Fruit is NOT behavior.**

You can have right behavior and poor attitude. Ex: begrudgingly saying “I'm sorry”

Good test is the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 - **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** <sup>23</sup> **gentleness and self-control**

If you want the right fruit you must have the right tree. What is the right tree for our children? Jesus says "I'm it." "I'm the vine, you're the branches."

- all of us need Jesus planted deep into our hearts to change us. It's what our children need. When your children are behaving in ways that are not loving and not good, that aren't in line with the fruit of the spirit the fruit of their life is revealing what seed is there.

Only the Gospel can CHANGE the heart of our children.... There are steps we can take to help our children realize the power and need for the Gospel!

### 1) ASK QUESTIONS

**A) Who do you think God is? Where do you think God is right now?** So often my children think they should be the center of the world.

Ex. **2 children fighting over a toy**, typically we ask “Who had it first?” a matter of justice; however in terms of the heart both are offenders. Both have a hardness of their heart and are being selfish towards each other. They think their happiness depends on having the toy and they want it regardless of what it means to you. → Talk to them about the heart of God. Do you think God is stingy? If God has given us his best, his Son, we see God is a good generous Father. Be generous because your father in heaven is generous. Give to others as God is going to give to you. Have you forgotten what He's done with you?

- remind our children of who God is and what He's done needs to be a regular occurrence.

**B) How do you think God views you right now? How do you think Mom and Dad think of you right now?**

Ex. **bad day at school and doesn't want to show us his folder**. Trying to hide and feeling ashamed.

Trying to teach my children not to hide their ‘badness’ from me.

Caution: calling your children ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Their actions may be good or bad... but their goodness and badness is dependent on where they are with Christ. Don't want to either give false hope or crush their identity. Even though I don't want them to falsely believe they're good, I want them to know they are deeply loved.

**C) Why do you think you're having a hard time with this?**

Ex. Noah “Patience is hard” or Keira “You're not my daddy. I don't love you.” → their heart needs to be changed. Only Christ can change our heart... When you recognize your inability to do something it shows me God is working in you. It is true that God commands you to love your parents (or to show the fruit of patience) but you can't right now. That is the bad news. But there is some really exciting news too... you can't love your brother like God is asking you too so you need a Rescuer to help you. God has already sent one... his name is Jesus! Be he has loved you in spite of your sin, and if you believe in Jesus and love Jesus, He will help you to learn to love your dad and change your heart so you can love others more and more. This isn't something you can do yourself though... you need Jesus to change you. .... Follow-up with a time of discipline and prayer that God would grant Keira the faith to believe that she needs the Rescuer, that Jesus would forgive her and would help her to love others.

## **2) CONFESSION**

Our children need to see how we wrestle with the same issues they wrestle with. Noah & Keira need to see how we like to rebel, break the rules and justify ourselves in doing so. Maya needs to know how I have this deep desire to get other's approval, follow all the rules and feel superior to those around me. Parents, don't let your children think you're perfect and never struggle!

They need to see how God works in our life and changes our heart. How God sets us free from the sin we struggle with.

A good rule for confession: it is appropriate to confess any sin that your children have become aware of or any sin that has affected them personally.

## **3) PRAYER**

Only God can change your children's heart. God may use your parenting to directly influence and engage their hearts in leading them to Himself, or He may use other circumstances in the lives of your children. Honestly, I don't care how God does it I just want my children to know Christ and put Him at the center of their life. I want them to be changed from the inside out but know that no matter how good of a parent I am I can't force that change to happen. So I am desperate for God to do what only He can do. Praying for your children should be a regular part of your life. Other than your spouse, your children should be the top people you pray for. Your children are your #1 ministry.

## **TAKE ACTION THIS WEEK**

Pray each day for your children.

Am I parenting in a way that focuses on their behavior or their heart? What percentage of your time with your children is spent in declaring rules and what percentage in talking about how the Gospel is relevant to them?

If you don't have children, do I simply focus on the actions of those around me or do I engage their hearts? Watch this week.

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PRAY

Summary of this week:

- usually we parent for behavior instead of getting to the heart
- instead of immediately correcting behavior ask questions to understand what's in their heart
- wrong goals: having nice kids, raising kids that are independent (many Christian kids are kind but no different than children of other faiths, non-faiths)
- right goal: lead our children to dependence on Jesus

Mark 7:21

“... from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.”

Key questions to think about for adults:

- 1) What are their beliefs about who God is? So often my children think they should be the center of the world.
- 2) What is that God like? What does He do or what has He done?
- 3) Who am I?
- 4) What I do. Everything I do is based on the above 3 questions.

#### TRAINING & INSTRUCTION

Only two passages in the NT directly speaking to parenting children: Colossians 3:21 & Ephesians 6:4

**“<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training [discipline] and instruction of the Lord.”**

Next week we’re going to be talking about how we instruct & train our children in Christ. However, notice everything Paul tells us to do should be “of the Lord.” Referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Woven in all our interactions with our children should be a constant reminder and retelling that there is a God who loves them, has sent His son Jesus to take on all the punishment they deserve, and if they believe and live for Jesus what seems impossible now (be it something like having patience, loving their sister or something like having a purpose in life and reason to live) God can make possible. With Christ life is an adventure....

Good opportunity to take Scripture and show them the adventures people lived for

God... for this to work they (and we as parents) must realize that life with Christ is much more than about their behavior and making bad boys and girls good... read pages 14-17 from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*

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