

Parenting - Years 0-5

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Preacher: Bryan Hart

[0:00] Okay, so I asked each of the folks who are leading the different breakouts to think about our church and this particular age group.

And what are the, like there's a million things we could talk about, but what are kind of the biggest blind spots or areas that just maybe need attention?

And so I'm going to share with you just for a few minutes, then we'll go to Q&A; two areas that I think when I, I mean, because I've spent time with a lot of parents directly.

They're talking about parenting or just with parents and their kids for other things. And there are two areas that I think are really important, but I feel like a lot of parents just, they don't know what they're doing.

And in some cases doesn't appear, they don't appear to realize that they don't know what they're doing. They don't even know that there are questions they should be asking, in other words. And again, that may not even be you in the room, but I'm just going to share with you a couple observations.

[1:03] I think the two areas for the zero to five age group that I just find myself wincing a lot when I kind of survey not only our church, but also just our culture are around discipleship and discipline.

And both of those two things are like, are the forming. So I think as kids get older, and this is especially true, I was talking to somebody about this yesterday, especially with dads.

I don't know why this is. I think I'd be interested to see if there's any research to back this up. My experience as a child and with lots of people I know is that men in particular, as fathers, really seem to come into a stride as their children get older.

And I've read a little bit about that. As kids get older, they need to take risks more. That's like a part of what they need to do. And so fathers, not always, but a lot of times fathers will be the ones who will encourage that more.

And so there's probably something biological happening there. But at the zero to five age, it can be easy to almost put off some of those intentional things until kids are older, and there can be a bit of a vacuum.

[2:11] So on discipleship, I think that at the zero to five, one of the most important things is to model as much, if not more, than teaching your kids on any number of things.

Because your kids will pick up more from what they observe you doing than necessarily what you sit down and explain to them. But who in the room, by the way, already has kids in this age range?

Okay. So I realize I'm preaching to the choir. I just want to reinforce this idea for you. Everything you want your child to do, I want to encourage you to look for ways to do it in front of them visibly.

Repentance. We are often, again, we're often correcting our children because they do a lot of things that they shouldn't do all the time. That's just part of parenting, especially when they're young.

They're touching things they're not supposed to touch.

They're getting into things they're not supposed to get into. And then, very quickly, we're teaching them to do things like ask for forgiveness and to say they're sorry. It will mean a world of difference for them to not only hear you explain why that's important, and I'm seeing some nods, but it is so powerful when you actually do it to them.

[3:29] So if you have never gotten on your knees and asked your children to forgive you, like, it is going to take that training lesson to a whole other level when they're actually watching you model for them the thing that you're wanting them to do.

I would encourage you at that young age to structure your day so that your children see things that you do that are important that they might not otherwise see.

Like, I've started to be aware that I need to make sure my devotions happen so my kids can see me having my devotions. I want them to see me spending time.

So if I'm doing that before they're awake, they never know I do that. Now, I might tell them they need to do that, but do they see me with my Bible? Do they see me praying? Do they see me worshipping?

In the busyness of life, it's very easy to let those things go, but then what ends up happening is we get in a situation where we're telling our children to do things they don't have any frame of reference for. I mentioned this a minute ago, but another thing I think that is especially helpful for this young age is that you have to be enthusiastic about what you want them to be enthusiastic for.

[4 : 47] And this is an area that I grieve a little bit for our church because I think that there's a lot of parents that are more enthusiastic for things, other things, than they are for Jesus.

So how do you talk about Santa Claus if you talk about Santa Claus with your kids? I'm not going there, but if you do that, how do you do it?

Like, what's your tone? What's your body language like? And then what's your body language like when you talk about Jesus? They are going to know what's really special, and they're going to know who's really magical, and they're going to know what the real hero is.

So you have to be able to find a way to do that. You don't have to be someone that you're not, but you have to be the best version of who you are when you talk to them about the most important things.

So again, when you do things like family devotions, and always start younger than you think you need to because it will just be their normal. Like, talk to them. This is my mom for years studied education, and she said, she used to tell me, like, it's a, and you've probably all heard this.

[5 : 50] It's good to talk to your babies. Like, if you have a baby, you talk to them. They don't know what you're saying, but there are, there's, like, psychologically and emotionally, there are things happening when you're just talking to them. So introducing discipleship into your family before they're even able to comprehend it, it will then, it sets a normal bar, and they will be, they will start picking up things that you, that you don't even realize.

And then the last thing I want to say just in that vein, an easy way to, to find ways to talk about Jesus is find who their heroes are and find ways to talk to them about how Jesus is better than that. It's a really easy way to bring the gospel into your day-to-day life. So, again, if your kid's really into Santa and you do the Santa thing, that's a layup. Man, how cool, this is just such a great thing.

Man, let me, do you realize what Santa does is not even, it's just, it's tiny compared to what Jesus does for you. Or if they're into, I mean, anything, they're into a story from a book, find ways to help them see that Jesus is the better version of the thing that they're really excited for.

But, again, you've got to do it in a way that they're convinced you're really excited for that.

Otherwise, I think that they see through it. Two practical things that I think you can do, these are in your resource sheets.

[7 : 13] A lot of families, if, hey, if you've got a resource that you use for things like family devotions, great, go for it. I'm really wanting to help people who don't feel confident in how to have family devotions or how to teach their kids how to read the Bible.

One of the easiest resources to use that we have, like, given out so many of these at One Harbor Church is a book called the Jesus Storybook Bible. Who here has used the Jesus Storybook Bible? A lot of us have.

I think I've, like, actually almost wept a couple times reading that thing. It's just really good. I was, like, amazed the first time I went with my kids' story. It actually even helped me. I mean, it, like, it added some richness to my own understanding of the gospel.

That Jesus Storybook Bible is a great thing. If you do nothing other than spend a little bit of time with your kids, reading that to them, asking them what they think, it's a great first step towards teaching them how to read the Bible, how to talk about Jesus.

The other thing I want to suggest is how many of you do community Bible reading here at One Harbor? Okay. Not as many hands. We use... Thanks, Holly. You were late, but I saw you.

[8 : 21] We use a devotional tool called community Bible reading, and it helps people. It teaches people how to read their Bible and to pray. The prayer part of that goes through something that's called ACTS, A-C-T-S, which stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

My favorite thing to do as a pastor is to sit with people and teach them how to pray using ACTS. I do it all the time. It's not an exaggeration to say maybe even once a week I will sit with someone and teach them how to do that.

I think it's a powerful way to teach people to pray. And the reason I like it is it's good for everybody, and you can teach your kids how to do this. So, again, it's one thing to tell our children they should read the Bible and they should pray.

It's another thing to explain to them how to do that. ACTS is a really easy way to teach our kids how to pray. So, very quickly, this is how I might do it with my children at the end of the day. I'll start by saying, and I mentioned some of this a minute ago.

I'll say, what's something about God that you think is really cool? And they'll probably say, I don't know. And so I'll help them. I'll help them think. We'll brainstorm. We'll come up with something.

[9 : 23] And the light bulb will come on. And the wonder will come in their eyes. We talked one time about how plants grow from seeds. And my kids got so excited about it. And we started talking about how God made that happen.

Then we pivot. And I say, now, why don't we tell him how cool that is? Let's take turns giving God some compliments. Now, what have I done? I've just taught my kids how to worship God.

Just do this thing. I'll do this with adults, too. But sometimes I'll say, hey, just pretend he's in the chair right there. I know it feels very silly. Pretend he's in the chair. What's something about him that you think is really cool?

So you can do those kind of things with your kids using the ax grid. Confession. Teaching them, hey, what's something that you did today that you wish you hadn't done? Well, now, let's ask God to forgive us for those things.

And again, I'm always leading the way in this stuff. So I'm doing it in front of them. I'm doing it with them. Hey, what can we thank God for? And they're going to probably say, oh, I'm thankful for this house.

[10 : 24] Or I'm thankful for my toys. I always try to, when we get to the thankful part, the thing I'm thankful for is the gospel. I want them to know that as far as I'm concerned, the best thing happening in my life is that Jesus loves me.

So when it comes to the Thanksgiving time, I'm always out loud in front of them. We're not just talking about it. We're also doing the prayer piece together. God, I thank you that you still love me today.

A minute ago, we were giving you all these compliments. And this is how good you are. And wow, then we confess our sin. Here's how bad I am. I screw up all the time. You still love me. Thank you. And then supplication, where we ask God for things.

Hey, what can we ask God for help with? Your kids can do this stuff brilliantly, and their prayers will, like, move you. Their prayers are beautiful. In fact, Jesus said our faith should be like our kids.

Faith. Faith like a child. I have been blessed by the faith of my children listening to these kind of prayers. So, zero to five. Discipleship.

[11 : 20] I think those are just some thoughts. And then we'll have time for Q&A; and other ideas that other people have in just a second. The other thing I want to encourage you with is to think about discipline.

Now, I know we're going to get into some of this in the Q&A.; How we do discipline. How we do discipline. Here's what I want to say. Even for adults, they say to create a new habit, it takes 30 days of doing the same thing.

That's the conventional wisdom. If you want to do a new habit, you have to do it for 30 days with no breaks. And that can sound like legalism, but it isn't about trying to get approval from anyone.

It's trying to form a new habit. Discipline with children should start as early as possible and with consistency.

So, our children, again, they need to know where the barriers are because they are constantly testing us. And the natural state of a child is violence.

[12 : 20] I read someone say this the other day. There is, statistically speaking, no one is more violent than two-year-olds. Or three, actually.

My experience. No, that's been my experience, too. They talk about the terrible twos. No one prepared us for the... What's worse than terrible? Horrible threes. That doesn't work with the alliteration, but... Threes were terrible. So, if you think about children, what do they naturally do?

They naturally are violent because it's the easy way. It's the way of the world. You don't train a snake to bite. It's in the nature of the beast. The nature of our children is violence. The nature of our children is to grab, to take, to hit, to bite.

So, the only way those things will change is if we discipline them. I want to ask you not to think that because sometimes it's cute that those things are okay.

Sometimes they are cute and they're funny. But remember, everything that we allow our child to do, if you let your child do something, you are indirectly saying it's okay. Now, obviously, we don't want to exasperate our kids.

[13 : 22] That's in the Bible, by the way. In the Bible, it says fathers don't exasperate your children. There's wisdom, so we don't exasperate them. But there are ways to faithfully and consistently train.

Again, the habit takes the 30 days of consistency. If you decide that there's an area you want to work with your child on, you have to do it. You have to respond to that behavior 100 times out of 100 until the habit is formed.

And then you can move on to something else. But please do not underestimate the value of consistency when you go to discipline your children.

And then the other two things I want to say about discipline, and then I'll be done, is that every child is different. And if your approach to parenting and discipline is efficiency, you will probably not be parenting them very well.

And I am the chief offender here. Nothing about parenting is efficient. So efficient kind of parenting is I find what works for one kid, and then I replicate it for everybody else.

[14 : 25] But every child is different. And so even the way that you discipline each child, you should be considering how that child responds. We have disciplined our kids and my family different ways, realizing that they respond to different things.

And some things can be more helpful, less helpful, even damaging, you know, if we're not careful. Which gets to the last suggestion I have on discipline, especially at this age.

Really, this is all ages, but I think it's especially easy at this age. I'm begging you never to discipline your children while you are angry with them.

It's better to let them get away with it than discipline them in anger. Guys, I remember thinking I would never be the kind of parent that would abuse my kid. And I'm not against spanking.

We'll probably get into some of this in a minute. I've stopped spanking my older two children because I recognize I actually have an anger problem, and I don't trust myself. I actually don't trust myself to spank them because sometimes they get me so mad, and I don't trust I'm going to be able to do it in a way that's calculated and in love for their good, rather than me so frustrated and mad and just taking it out on them in a very ungodly and, frankly, unlawful way.

[15 : 46] So this is where if you're, we may have some single moms in the room. By the way, if you're a single mom, we want to help you as a church because we think you need help.

So we want to say that we are for single moms. If you are married, one of the ways you can capitalize on your relationship is to tap out when you need to tap out.

Kimberly, please, please do this. If you're dealing with a child and your blood's boiling, go get the other parent, worst-case scenario, just step away from it altogether and come back and deal with it because discipline is supposed to be for their good.

Discipline is supposed to be, we relate to our children, not based on their performance but on their relationship to us. So the difference between discipline and punishment is that punishment is oriented towards the thing that's happened.

Discipline is oriented towards the person we're trying to train. It's actually not just about the fact that they broke the window. How do we train them to live in such a way that they don't keep breaking windows? And so it's love-oriented. It's love-focused.

[16 : 47] Thank you.