

Parenting Workshop - Main Session

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 August 2018

Preacher: Bryan Hart

[0 : 0 0] I do again just want to thank you for investing some time today. Parenting is actually a skill, and it's worth a Saturday morning. It's worth getting some training on it. If you do, you know, if you have a job, there's a lot of other things, a lot of other skills that you need in life, and it just makes sense that you get trained on those things before you go do them.

But that's not always how we think about parenting, which is kind of weird. Like if you are going to get a car, well, you have to go take a class on how to drive, and the government says you have to do that before you're going to get a license. If you want to go hunting, you take a weapon safety class. When I was in the Marine Corps, you know, we probably got some service members in the room. You know, before you join the service, you go to boot camp or officer candidate school or something like that. But if you get pregnant or your wife gets pregnant, you know, what do you do? And I think for some of us, we lean into these things. And by virtue of the fact that you're in the room, I'm assuming you are the kind of person that does these things. But just appreciate that culturally, a lot of people don't really lean in to parenting. They don't really lean into trying to learn about this very important subject. In fact, something I hear all the time is, and this is kind of a cultural thing to say, is parents will say, you know, I know what's best for my child. And I always think that's strange because I don't feel that way at all. In fact, when you buy a car, it doesn't mean that because it's now yours that you automatically know what's best for that car. Like, you know better than anybody else because it's mine. Who are you to tell me what's best for my car? But parenting, when it comes to parenting, there's something in the cultural water that can sometimes make us feel like we know what's best. And frankly, you know, all those other things that

I mentioned to you, I've done all those things. And yet, actually, nothing has challenged me more than being a parent. Being a Marine was far easier. Going to college was far easier. Parenting, I think, is one of the hardest things that we will ever do in life. And yet, for many people, it's not something that they do invest in their training and their knowledge. So it's worth getting trained on. We've got three goals for today. And these are for all of us, wherever you are on your journey of parenting.

We've got, like, some people who aren't parents yet but are wanting to be, whether that's they want to be biological parents or they want to be foster parents or adoptive parents. You know, we've got some desire in the room. We've also got some people who've been doing this a very long time.

We've got some people that are probably doing parenting really, really well and probably some people that are actually struggling a little bit with this. But we have three goals for everyone. First, our goal is that you're going to leave feeling the tension between two things. What you are responsible for and the weight that is on your shoulders as a parent. That intention with the fact that it is actually the Holy Spirit that empowers you to do those things. And so I'm hoping you leave feeling a little bit of the tension there and feeling both of those things more maybe than you did when you came in. And frankly, some of us are prone for not really holding them in tension and feeling one more than the other. Some of us are prone to feeling a lot of responsibility for things that maybe aren't in our control. And then others of us, I think, don't feel enough responsibility.

[3 : 31] Or maybe we simply feel the right things but in the wrong direction. Maybe some of us feel very responsible for things that are in the land of the Holy Spirit. But then we think that God's going to take care of things that he has actually delegated to us. So we want you to leave feeling the tension between those two things. The second goal is we want to lift your gaze for what is possible with parenting. And frankly, just the preparation of these notes for me this week has re-inspired me as a parent because I need that. Man, when you are in the trenches of parenting, you can feel like, well, you can just have a very low view of what God's capable of doing through you in the lives of your kids. We don't want you to leave feeling guilty. Let me just say that. So we're going to talk about some things that none of us are doing perfectly. The goal isn't that you leave feeling guilty about how bad you've done. The goal is you leave inspired for how much more you can do with the power of the Holy Spirit going forward. So that's the second goal. The third goal is to resource you. We want you to leave here with some next steps. Not overwhelmed, but with some clarity on maybe a few areas that you can give some attention to right away. There are some resource sheets that we printed out that are on your seats. These are for you to take home. That's the first kind of resource we want you to have.

We want you to be able to follow. I mean, we're only here together for a few hours. This is like a major subject. We got a few hours together. We're barely going to scratch the surface. But there is something to be said for continuing education. And so here are some resources. Maybe you've got questions about things that we don't get to today. You'll have that resource sheet. The other kind of resource that we're trying to provide you are human resources. We're going to break up into some workshops here in about an hour.

And in those workshops, we are going to have panels. And the panelists are there to do some Q&A; and some discussion. We have a lot of amazing parents in our church. We just picked a handful of folks so that you could ask questions of somebody. And when you leave, be able to say, you know what? I actually, just because I have kids, I actually don't know what's always best for them. I need like an older brother, an older sister I can go to and say, hey, can I talk to you about what we're dealing with? Just so you know, I mentioned the Kinsser family. They have been that for my wife and I for many years. They're a few steps ahead of us.

And so there's someone that we can go to. They're role models for us. And so that's the other kind of resource we want to offer you this morning. So a little bit of an outline of our time. We're going to be in here, like I said, for roughly an hour. And we're going to start with a vision of parenting that's not tied to an age group. It's not so much about application. It's more about philosophy. And that is really important because one of the worst things that we can do is get into the how-to, the nuts and bolts, without first addressing the philosophy that sometimes we don't even realize we have a philosophy of parenting. And so we're going to take the first hour to talk about a philosophy of parenting.

Then we're going to get into some breakouts that are age-specific. Lee Johansson is going to give us some direction at the end of my time here about where to go. And when you're in your breakouts, you're going to get a little more teaching that is specific to that age, followed by a whole bunch of time for Q&A; with the panelists that are in your age group.

[6 : 58] And so I want you to see that the progression is really from closed-handed to open-handed. So the things I'm going to be sharing from up here, these are things that we feel quite strongly about. But as we get into the Q&A; later in the morning, we're going to be talking about all kinds of things that are very open-handed, meaning reasonable people can disagree on a lot of the how-to.

And that's actually okay. One of the reasons we picked multiple panelists is we wanted you to have the benefit of hearing how different people do things. And so again, we're not asking for you to necessarily agree with all those panelists on everything, but more of the having the models.

This session that I'm doing now is going to be videoed. It's going to be put for the time being, I believe what we're going to do is probably put it on the website under the Moorhead Sermons page.

So if you want to find this later or you want to share this with somebody else, this video will be there as well as the audio recordings, hopefully the audio recordings from all of the breakouts. So that is where we're going.

Why don't we pray and we're going to jump in. Lord, I want to thank you that, well, one that you've given us children. Your word tells us that they're a blessing and they are.

[8 : 08] And some of us are feeling that right now. Some of us are looking forward to the day where we are going to be blessed with kids. But whatever the case is, we really feel the privilege of the fact that you create people in your image and then you let us steward them and you let us raise them.

And I do pray that this morning would be helpful for us. We want to leave here feeling more confident that we're prepared to glorify you in this really important area. And I pray that you would help me and everyone else who's going to help lead this morning in the breakouts.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. I want to start by saying what qualifies me to share what I'm about to share is not that I'm a parent.

I've only been a parent seven years, like I said. So there are people in the room more qualified than me to share from their experiences. With the exception of some anecdotes, what I am going to be sharing with you this morning are biblical principles for parenting.

In fact, I think that what I'm sharing with you could be shared by someone who's never been a parent. If you think of Paul in some of his letters writing about marriage. Paul wasn't married and yet he had a vision of marriage that was helpful.

[9 : 18] And so I want to start off by just by telling you that, that I think it's the word of God that ultimately gives me any credibility in what I'm going to share with you this morning.

I'm going to start by reading you a passage of scripture that is not even remotely about parenting. I know you're feeling really good about this morning so far, aren't you?

And what I mean by that is it wasn't written about parenting, but it's about a principle upon which godly parenting must be based. And it's from Matthew 25. It's a parable. I have thought of this parable many times in my own parenting.

It's been a sober reminder for me. And I'm just going to read it for you. Starting in verse 14. Jesus is talking about the kingdom of heaven. And he says that it will be like a man who's going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each one according to his ability. And then he went away. And so I just want to highlight something. First, already in this parable, there are multiple servants, but they're not all the same.

[10 : 22] And God does not entrust them with the same things because, or the master who's, you know, being portrayed as God here. The master in this story doesn't entrust them with the same things.

He entrusts them with, in accordance to the abilities that they have. And so he who had the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more, but he who had received the one talent went and dug it in the ground and hid his master's money.

Now, after a long time, the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents.

Here, I have made you five talents more. And his master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.

And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, Master, you delivered to me two talents. Here, I have made two talents more for you. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

[11 : 26] You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. Master. And something to notice there. Those two servants had been given different amounts.

And they came back, at least on the surface you could say, they came back having had different success. The one made more than the other. And yet the response of the master to both is the same. You've been faithful.

And I think that's important. And we're going to come back to that. But just see that. It's the same response from the master to both of these servants. Goes on.

And he also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, gathering where you scattered no seed. So I was afraid. And I went and I hid your talent in the ground.

Here, you have what is yours. But his master answered him, You wicked and slothful servant. You knew that I reap where I haven't sown and I gather where I've not scattered any seed.

[12 : 23] Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers. And at my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten.

For everyone who has will be given. And he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness.

And that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So some things just to draw your attention to. And I kind of already highlighted a couple of them. First of all, the first two masters, or first two servants, they're given a treasure to steward.

And they're given different amounts. And they succeed in different ways. But they're both faithful. And that's what they get commended for. The third servant, though, has a problem. And at the root of his problem is he has a misperception of his master.

He has a toxic view of his master. And because of the way he sees his master, he's led into laziness. He doesn't work on behalf of his master. He neglects his job to focus on his own priorities.

[13 : 30] He's a bad steward. And that is what this parable is about. Stewardship. Being a good steward of things that have been entrusted to you, but actually don't belong to you.

They belong to God. And I do think that parenting can be talked about in many ways. But I think that the most important way we should start off talking about parenting is a stewardship.

It's a bunch of other things, too. It's discipleship. And we're going to talk about some of that. And it's training. And it's loving. But before anything else, parenting is stewardship. Most of the bad parenting that I've witnessed as a pastor here and the bad parenting that I have had to repent of in my own life.

And there has been plenty of bad parenting in my life. Most of that bad parenting seems to have been a result of straying from or abandoning the principle of stewardship.

Because as parents, we are prone to thinking that our kids are ours. Which is why you hear so often parents say things like, who are you to talk to me about my kids? Well, they're not yours.

[14 : 40] We forget that we have been entrusted with them for a time so that they can develop and mature into the people that God is planning on using for his purposes. And that kind of bad parenting, it only happens when we drift from a worshipful, obedient posture before God.

When the view of our master is what it should be, like that third servant. When we drift from him, the same thing happens to us that happened to the third servant. We become lazy. We forget that we are going to give an account for everything.

The master will return and it's possible that we will not have stewarded the treasure in the way that he has expected us to. And again, that happens when we start thinking that our kids belong to us.

That they're ours. Friends, our kids are not. They're not ours. They're his. And God gives us them for a season and expects that we are going to be faithful to help them grow into who he wants them to be.

But remember this. He rejoices at our faithfulness, not our success rate. Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a little.

[15 : 54] I won't trust you with more. Those first two servants, they were given different amounts. They succeeded in different measure. But they were faithful. In parenting, you are responsible for faithfulness.

And God is responsible for fruitfulness. I'm going to come back to this principle again and again. This is one of the easiest things to forget. I would actually also say this isn't just true about parenting. This is true in every area of your life. But it is definitely true in parenting.

You can't make things grow. We talked about this on a Sunday morning recently, actually. You know, there's that passage where Paul is talking about the church. And he says, I planted this other guy, Apollos, watered.

But God gives the growth. We can only be faithful. Farmers, they can't make, you know, there's not been a human being who's been able to figure out how to make things grow. We just know how to be faithful to do the things that are conducive for growth.

If you take a seed and you put it in the right soil and give it the right amount of water, boom, it does what it's made to do. And God is the one who makes that happen. Being a good steward means being faithful to do the things that are conducive for growth so that our kids will grow into who God wants them to be.

[17 : 01] So if your kids aren't as fruitful as you like, at the end of the day, that is not necessarily on you, actually. Your faithfulness is on you.

And that is it. And then God will use your efforts, weak as they are, imperfect as they are, and he will use them to the extent he wants to cause your children to grow into who he wants them to be.

The question is, and this is important, the question is, what does he want them to be? Because the way that you nurture, the way that you're faithful is going to be shaped by what you think they're supposed to be later in life.

And at One Harbor, I would say the answer for us on that question is fairly straightforward. We have core values as a church. We can put them up on the screen. These are our core values.

As we've said, you know, we think when it comes to being a Jesus follower, this is what it looks like. A Jesus follower, a Christian, is someone who's been transformed by the gospel, someone who lives a life of worship, someone who's committed to community, and someone who partners in the church on the mission of God.

[18 : 12] So the objective of our parenting is to raise kids that look like that. That is the goal of our parenting. And, you know, there's other ways to articulate that, right?

I mean, at any number of other churches, you could get a different maybe formulaic expression of what we're driving towards to. But you're probably going to find in any gospel-centered church anyway, in any Jesus-centered church, you're going to find some variant of these ideas.

In Psalm 127, this is like the classic go-to text on, or one of the classic go-to texts on parenting and being parents. Psalm 127 says, The metaphor being used there is that of archery.

Children are these gifts that are meant to be shot out, not aimlessly, but at a target. Like, you don't just pop arrows into the air for fun. You shoot them at something.

And so those values that we had up on the screen, that's what we're shooting at. So what I'm going to do with the majority of our time here this morning is we're going to look at each one of those things. How do we parent towards those things in principle?

[19 : 30] And so first, and I'm going to spend the most time on the first one, we parent kids into the gospel according to the gospel. And I'm really trying to say two things here.

We want our kids to get the gospel so that when they get older, they can articulate it. We want them to appreciate it, to find that it's beautiful. But the only way that happens is if the principles of the gospel are what we're using in our parenting.

So it isn't just enough that we can say the gospel, that we can articulate it. Our parenting has to be informed by it. That's more straightforward than it sounds when you realize that the gospel is a parenting story.

So in Genesis, God creates Adam and Eve, and he gives them a benediction, which is essentially a blessing or a mark of approval. He creates Adam, and he says, you are very good.

Very good. But then, and I'm going to just race through the story of redemptive history, but Adam and Eve sin, and then everything has changed. The whole course of humanity has changed. And throughout the rest of the Old Testament, which is a really sad story, you do not see God give that benediction ever again.

[20 : 37] He doesn't ever again step down and say, you are good, because things are not good. But then Jesus Christ shows up, and he is a new kind of son. He's a perfect son.

And when he's baptized, there's a Garden of Eden moment happening at his baptism, because the Father from heaven, in this booming voice, says so that people can hear, this is my son in whom I am well pleased.

He's very good. It's the benediction from Eden again for the first time. And then this Jesus, despite his perfection, we know the story.

He agrees to stand before God and take the punishment of all the badness of the world. He dies on the cross, so you have the good son giving his life for the bad sons. But then the Bible goes on to say that anyone who receives Jesus Christ as Savior, anyone who trusts in him, will, by the incredible grace of God, be adopted into the family of God.

So that the Father is now your Father, and Jesus is your older brother. And Jesus has the inheritance of a firstborn. But he's going to share that with you. And the Bible says that you don't just get his inheritance, you actually, you get his righteousness.

[21 : 46] Galatians 3 says that those of us who've been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. So now when the Father looks at us, he doesn't just see us, he sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

And we are once again very good. That's the story of the gospel. It is a parenting story. And so according to that story, there's a few important things.

One, we're not born good. I don't want to get too much in the weeds on doctrine and theology. But if you're not familiar with the idea of original sin or the doctrine of original sin, it is the idea, and Christians argued about this in the early church for a long time, it's that you're not born neutral and then you choose whether to be good or bad.

Historically, Orthodox Christianity has stated we're born broken. We're born with a problem from birth. And that's that sin nature in us. We cannot make ourselves good. Only Jesus can do that.

Second principle in this story is that God approves of us before we do anything. So God had this whole plan laid out, but I'm getting ready, my wife and I are getting ready to adopt a little boy. End of October, he is officially going to be a heart.

[22 : 53] We're really excited about that. But we chose to do that before that little boy did anything for us. He had done nothing. We chose, we're making him a part of our family. And guess what?

He'll never not be a part of our family. On the worst day of his life, he'll still be our son. We'll still love him. God approves of us before we do anything, before we perform. And then the third principle is that we obey God because of what Jesus did, not to earn anything from him.

There's nothing left to earn. He's given us everything. So if we're going to parent according to the gospel, it means we must parent our kids the way that the Father has parented us.

And I will say that some of this is not necessarily complex, and it's not complicated, but it is certainly not intuitive. It's not natural. In fact, I think the default ways that many of us, including myself, man, I'm pointing the finger at myself more than anyone else because I know how I naturally parent my kids.

Our default ways of parenting are often anti-gospel, and they reflect the way that we think about goodness, what it means for a kid to be a good kid. The way that we think about goodness often has to do with laws and rules and standards, and this can take a lot of different forms.

[24 : 03] You know, maybe you're the kind of parent where you really care about your kids' grades, and being good means you're behaving well in school, you're getting good grades. Maybe that stuff's not as important to you, but you really care about having really socially adjusted kids.

Those things are all important. I'm just making the case that we all have a performance-based standard, and our kids are good when they meet that standard. Meeting the standard is the way to goodness. And it doesn't matter how good or righteous the standard is.

Parenting kids that way will lead to some form of legalism, and it will lead to actually children that aren't good. It may lead to children who believe that they're better than others because they recognize that they follow the rules so much better than their peers do.

By the way, that was my story. I grew up a very condescending person, frankly. Very judgmental. I still struggle with that, but I was very much like the Pharisees, straight-laced and critical of everyone who couldn't do as well as me.

Or it will lead to children who believe that actually the standard is so high, they're convinced that they're not good. They'll never be able to get there, and they become incredibly insecure, and they will do terrible things to get approval.

[25 : 16] They know that they're not good. They know they never will be, and they give up trying. They grow up to be lawbreakers, and they're not good either. Those philosophies, they're not based on the gospel, and they don't actually lead to goodness.

So the gospel says, we're not born good. We can't make ourselves good. Only Jesus can do that. Our parenting sometimes suggests, though, that if children obey enough, they can actually make themselves good.

The gospel says that God approves of us before we perform, but many children grow up thinking that they are only approved of if they perform well enough. Again, I don't know what your standard is, but it's easy for that to happen.

The gospel says we obey because God loves us, not to earn something from him, but our parenting often teaches children that their good behavior will earn them everything, even God's approval and love. And maybe you're thinking, but I've never said any of those things.

And you probably, I'll give you the benefit of the doubt that maybe you've never said those things explicitly, but I wonder if we got all the kids who are back there in kids' ministry, and we march them out here right now, and we asked them, what makes God love them?

[26 : 20] I wonder what they would say. And how many of them would say that it's because they obey their mommies and daddies? How many would say that? Now, gospel-centered parenting does not mean that we don't train our kids, we don't teach them, we don't discipline them, and it doesn't mean that laws are bad.

Godly parenting uses the law, but it's not centered on the law. And there's a difference there, and we're gonna talk a little bit about that. So we wanna teach our kids to obey, and we do that in a lot of different ways, which I'm not gonna get into right now.

We wanna teach them to be moral, but what can happen is we can slip into thinking that they've actually been saved by Jesus, that who they are inside is good because they're behaving a certain way, and that's moralism, and that's not good.

And so it's not just that we want them to obey, the question of why becomes very important. Why do they want to obey? If our children grow up to obey because they're so grateful for the grace of God in their lives, well, that's what we want.

I mean, that's a great thing. They've received the benediction from God that they are loved, that they are approved of, not because they have obeyed. They obey because God has blessed them.

[27 : 33] That's what we want for them. That's the target. But if our children obey for the sake of keeping a standard, I want you to appreciate this, and this is not an overstatement.

If our children learn to obey for the sake of keeping a standard, or getting approval, it can be more dangerous to their soul than not obeying at all. And that sounds like an overstatement, but I want to prove to you from Scripture that it's not.

So in Luke 19, Jesus said that he came for those who knew they needed a physician. So which sounds worse? It's a society of children that grow up to be very kind of immoral lawbreakers, or a society of children who grow up to be moralistic, self-congratulating Pharisees.

Which would be worse? Well, this group of people are probably going to be, practically speaking, a lot more dangerous. So we don't want this over here, obviously. But these folks will quickly see their need for a Savior.

And you see that in the history of the church. The gospel is appealed to the worst kinds of people, because they're the ones who know that they need it. This other group here, they can be prone to resisting God's grace, because they don't think they need it.

[28 : 42] Think about this, and as a parent, this is a good thing to think about a lot. Who is it that called for the execution of Jesus? This is one of the paradoxes of the Christian story, is that it wasn't the murderers, and the prostitutes, and the rapists.

It was the rule-abiding Pharisees that called for the execution of Jesus. And that is the worst, most heinous thing that has happened in the history of the world. When our parenting is moralistic, and that's very possible especially in a Christian environment, in the culture of the church, we can drift into that without even realizing where we base things on the law.

Rule keepers will make us very proud. Rule breakers will break our heart. But when our parenting is based on the gospel, we'll see that actually both kids are bankrupt, and both kids need Jesus in the same measure.

So when we teach our kids about rules and laws, it's partly for their safety and well-being. Obviously, life works better when children obey the laws. We want to teach them those things for their own safety.

There is another reason to teach them the law, though. In her book, *Give Them Grace*, which is one of the books in your resource sheet, it's fantastic. I'll tell you, that was the book that Kimberly and I read years ago that the lights first went on for me that I had been, I mean, for crying out loud, my job is to preach the gospel on Sunday mornings sometimes.

[30 : 05] And yet, I realized how much of the gospel was absent in my parenting. Her book was so helpful for me. And she said in her book, We're commanded to give our children the law so that they'll be crushed by it and see their need for a savior.

The law won't make them good. It will make them despair of being good enough. And in that way, it will make them open to the love, sacrifice, and welcome of their savior, Jesus Christ. Sometimes, again, I'm trying to be honest with you, we really don't always do things right, but we're learning.

And sometimes, you know, when we're struggling with our children, like Lila Faye, for instance, she'll get exasperated. She'll say, I just can't do it. It's just something like, there's something wrong inside me.

And that's a great moment where we said, now we're really getting somewhere. You can't do it. You need Jesus for that. This is never going to change if you just keep trying.

Why don't we talk to him about this? Why don't, like there are opportunities to use the law to show the kids that they can't keep the law, that they need, that they need Jesus.

[31 : 08] And so we teach them to obey, but we don't make promises the Bible doesn't make, right? We don't promise that if they obey enough, that fill in the blank, they will see Jesus in heaven. Now there are rewards for obedience. There are.

But we got to make sure we don't directly or indirectly promise what the Bible doesn't promise. Because according to the gospel, salvation and the benediction of God, it can't be earned. It's given by grace.

And that's what gospel parenting should always be doing, is emphasizing grace. It's grace that saves and it's grace that makes us good. Nothing else. And if we actually believe that, it should have a major influence on how we parent and how we disciple and how we discipline and how we reward.

Because the message of the gospel is not like any other religion. So if our parenting is actually gospel-centered, and this is a bit of a, you got to be honest with yourself about this.

If our parenting is gospel-centered, then that means it should look different to the parenting of a very reputable non-Christian. Whether that's just someone who doesn't believe anything or a Jew or a Muslim or in anything.

[32 : 16] Because if our parenting is based on the gospel, well, we're the only ones who believe that. So what makes our parenting distinct? We must teach them the law.

We must give them the laws, but we then must give them grace. The grace of the gospel. Teaching them that God's law is holy and good, but reminding them it is unbelievably heavy.

Unbelievably. And that Jesus is the only one who obeyed it perfectly. And that is how our Heavenly Father has parented us. He gave us the law and then He gave us grace and truth in Jesus Christ.

That's the kind of parents we're supposed to be. We're supposed to parent like Him. Let me give you just one practical example of how, and I had more, but for the sake of time, I've caught a lot of this. One practical example, maybe how you encourage your kids.

So our oldest, she struggles with habits. She gets a bad habit. She's a creature of habit. And so we struggled over the years helping her break those habits. Now, you know, one of them was sucking her thumb.

[33 : 17] Now, maybe you've had a kid that struggled with something, trying to learn something, do something. When it's time to, when they do well and you praise them, what do you say? So you could just say, well, I could just say, wow, Lila Faye, I haven't seen you sucking your thumb all day.

Man, that's a great job. I can say that. I can also say, man, Lila Faye, I'm seeing the grace of God in your life. He is helping you break your habit. Isn't that amazing?

Now, I'm not saying we can never just say good job, but there are countless opportunities every day to talk to our kids in such a way that God is the one who actually looks like the hero. We're actually congratulating Him.

We're seeing the grace in His life. This is actually, and if you think that's a bit of a stretch, actually, it's really not. In Acts 11, there's a story where, I'll read these verses to you about this church, and the hand of the Lord was with him, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord, and the report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch, where this church was.

So Barnabas goes to see this church, and when he came and he saw the grace of God, he was glad, and that's interesting. When he saw the grace of God, he was glad. Not when he saw the great preaching, the great community groups.

[34 : 24] No, he saw the grace of God. And so when we, even when we encourage our kids, there's a way to encourage them that highlights the grace of God. If we only ever just congratulate our kids, they will actually crave our benediction.

They will crave our blessing and our approval, and they will try again and again to keep earning that. But if you are always congratulating God, if you are looking for ways to creatively emphasize and tell of his grace, well, you end up making God look good.

And instead of giving our kids, even sometimes this can just happen indirectly, like we're not even trying to, but we can inadvertently give them a false sense of security, we are instead painting a big picture of God that will make them long for his approval and his blessing and ultimately to find it and to be satisfied in it.

Now, to make sure I'm not being misheard, I'm not saying that every conversation has to be a gospel presentation. I'm just saying there are ways, there are ways to weave the gospel in.

How do we talk, do we, when we talk to our kids, do we emphasize again and again the grace of the gospel? Now, again, you might be thinking, man, this sounds nice. You don't know my kids.

[35 : 37] They're off the walls. And I don't have time to turn every single thing into a grace of the gospel conversation. At the end of the day, I still have to teach them and train them and discipline and get out the door.

Guys, the irony of what happened between me and my son on the way out the door to this very thing, I was like, they would not be proud of me. I'm really struggling.

Yeah, we do have to do those things and it is hard. But I want to say this, gospel-centered parenting also trains with grace. So it isn't that we don't train them, but we train them with grace.

In Titus 2, it says, for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people so we know that salvation comes by grace. But then it says, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. It's the grace of God that actually trains us to do that.

The grace of God does train our behavior. The question is, how does that work in parenting? Well, again, I'll just give you a few examples of what it looks like to say, to discipline.

[36 : 37] That's a form of training. What is it like to discipline with the law versus to discipline with grace? Let's say you've got a 10-year-old and he's playing in the house with a baseball. You've told him like a dozen times not to do this and he's doing it again anyway and he breaks a window.

Now, this is a training moment. You're angry. You didn't want to spend your morning dealing with this, but it's a training moment. What are you going to do? How are you going to speak to your child?

If it's with the law, here's what I might say to my son if he did this. Dawson, I have told you like 12 times not to do this and you broke the rule again.

Look what you did. You know better than this, Dawson. You know how to be a good kid. You're grounded for the weekend or whatever the consequences. And I want to be honest with you, lately, Kimberly and I, so we got four, we got like kids coming out of the woodwork.

That's how it feels like to us. And two of them are babies and we've been really tired. And frankly, that's what a lot of my parenting has looked like. I just want to be honest with you. That's what a lot of my parenting has looked like lately. And it's not a good excuse.

[37 : 42] I'm just telling you that's what it's been like. But that's parenting. That's disciplining and training with the law. When you discipline and train with the law, you characterize your children by how they act.

If they act bad, they're a bad kid. If they act good, they're a good kid. They learn that they are valued based on their performance. It's just natural to parent that way.

If you respond with grace, here's what you might say. Here's what I might say to Dawson. And actually, yesterday, I was, again, trying to get back in the habit of doing this because it takes so much intentionality.

But here's what you might say if you're disciplining with grace. You might say, Dawson, you are my son. And I love you.

And even when you do things I have told you not to do and you do them again and again and again, I love you. I want you to know that. But you have broken my rules.

[38 : 39] You've known the rules. We've talked about them and you've broken them again. And because of that, there's going to be a consequence. You're going to be grounded for the weekend. Because when you disobey, what you're doing is that you're saying that what you want is most important.

And you have forgotten something, buddy. You have forgotten that Jesus, you know, there was a time he didn't want to do what his father told him to do. And he did it anyway. And he did it because he loves you.

And I know for a fact you don't really know how much he loves you because when you do, you're going to be able to obey like he obeyed. Now, I know we don't have time for those conversations every day.

But we have time for them sometimes. Especially when kids do things like break windows and our emotions are up and they feel really guilty and they're expecting the hammer. That is the time to give them the gospel.

To discipline them and to train them but to do it with the gospel. One way of handling these things is obey so you will be valued and loved. Another way says even in your disobedience, I love you.

[39 : 50] Obey because I love you. Obey me because you are my son. And you're not loved just by me. You're loved by God.

That's training with grace. It's using the model of the father in the story of the Bible. He doesn't, you know the father, you see this again and again.

He doesn't treat us based on our behavior once we're saved. He treats us based on our relationship to him. He says that we're his children and that is always how he initiates towards us.

Another example, maybe your kids are fighting. Gosh, my older two, they're starting to fight a lot. It's so exhausting when that happens. And again, if you parent with a law, you're just going to say something like, you know, stop fighting.

Just be nice. Just be, why can't you just be nice? It's funny. I remember my mom saying that to me when I was a kid and I was fighting with my brother and I was like, it's so clear. He's such a jerk. But now I'm like, I'm doing the same thing.

[40 : 50] Why can't you just be nice? But when we're doing well, we'll say things like, man, guys, Jesus has been so kind to you. He's been so kind to you. Think of what he's done for you.

Don't you think you can show a little bit of that kindness to each other? Again, it's telling them what to do, but it's anchoring it in the gospel or retaliation, you know? She hit me first.

Well, it doesn't matter. Fighting is wrong. You know, that's the easy answer. We could also say something like, I understand that you were angry at your sister and if I was in your shoes, I'd be upset too. But think about this, buddy.

Jesus was beat up and he was crucified and insulted and he chose not to hit back and he did it for you and because he did that for us, don't you think we can do that for him?

We cannot hit back. Again, we're telling them what to do, but we're emphasizing the story of Jesus. We're always making Jesus the hero. At the back of that book, Give Them Grace, there's an appendix if you get the book with like dozens of ways in just various practical situations like this to just bring the gospel in and a number of those other resources are helpful with these kinds of things or those kinds of things how to have those kind of conversations.

[42 : 04] Now, that can sound like a lot of pressure, but actually, I want to tell you one of the other counterintuitive things about gospel-centered parenting is it actually takes the pressure off.

Gospel-centered parenting sets you free from the weight of ownership. Remember, you're a steward, not an owner. That actually is liberating once you experience it.

Once you remember that you're only meant to be faithful, the fruitfulness is something that God does. You just have to be faithful. And so, it brings freedom in a lot of areas.

I'll just give you a highlight one or two. It frees you from the pressure of liking your kids. I want to say this especially to the moms in the room. Seriously.

Seriously. The Bible doesn't say you have to like your kids. It does not say that. And how many of us have had moments where we didn't like our kids? Because sometimes they're not enjoyable.

[43 : 01] If you didn't put your hand up and you got kids, you are a liar. There are times where our kids are not enjoyable. Let me tell you, the culture that we're living in has told us a lie that you must always like your children.

And that is actually not true. You should not feel guilty about there being days where you struggle to enjoy them. Because the Bible says you're called to love them. And love is characterized by action.

You just have to be faithful to show them the love of Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus died for us while we were still his enemies. There are days where our kids really feel like our enemies.

And it's, seriously, you can be, you don't have to feel guilty about the fact that when your child's going through a rough season that you don't enjoy being around them.

Gospel-centered parenting also frees you from the pressure of ensuring that your kids like you. Now, if they don't like you because you're actually a monster, that's one thing. That's not what I'm talking about. If your kids are in a rebellious stage and maybe they say hurtful things, they say that they hate you, they wish you weren't their parent.

[44 : 08] If you think the expectation is, if you think that the Bible has told you that you must have a fantastic friendship with your children, then when your kids say that kind of thing, you're going to have an identity crisis.

Gospel-centered parenting sets you free from that. It reminds you that not only can you not make your kids love Jesus, you can't make them love you.

You can't make them like you. You can only be faithful every day to do the things that are conducive for growth. My kids have said some pretty horrible things to me and they are hurtful, by the way.

They are hurtful. Dad, I hate you. Well, what do you say when your kid says that? I try to say something like, man, but that's a horrible thing for you to say.

But I can't keep you from saying that. You can hate me. But it doesn't matter for my job. My job is to faithfully love you, even if you hate me.

[45 : 08] And even when you hate me, I'm going to love you because that's what Jesus has done for me. The gospel, it protects you from finding your identity in your kids.

If we want kids who are transformed by the gospel, our parenting has to be transformed by the gospel and we can't just teach them what the gospel is. We have to actually model it in the way we relate to them.

So maybe some of you right now, I just want to pause and say maybe you're feeling like, man, I've not done this stuff. I'm not a good parent. Well, now let me preach the gospel to you. You are not a good parent.

There is only one good father. Jesus said that. And I just, I want to minister to some of you right now who are feeling guilt about how you've parented. You are not Jesus and you cannot be Jesus.

And he loves you even when you have been a horrible parent. He loves you. And he's redemptive. He has a plan to redeem your worst days to bring fruit in the life of your children.

[46 : 13] Gospel-centered parenting, that last pressure it lifts from us is we don't have to be Jesus. We are free every day to repent and to turn to him and not live in guilt and shame for struggling with these things.

I think the important thing, this is the last thing I want to say on the transformed by the gospel piece. When you're on a plane, you know that little thing they do at the beginning and they say, hey, you got to take the air and if the things come, what are those called?

The mask. All right, whatever. The mask. Before you help the person next to you, you got to have it on yourself. You've got to be rooted in the gospel before you're going to get your kids rooted in the gospel.

You will die and suffocate if you're not breathing this stuff in before you're helping them. So we spent the most of our time on the gospel, how the gospel influences parenting.

I'm going to race through some of these other ones, but these are also important. We must parent our kids into worship. So guys, worship is the purpose of human life. It's what we're going to do for all of eternity.

[47 : 18] It's what we're designed for. The Bible is very clear about that. Isaiah 43. God said, the people who I form for myself, I form them that they might declare my praise. Like, that's what we're going to do for all of eternity is worship Jesus.

And so success in parenting means raising kids that they don't just articulate the gospel, they actually enjoy God. They enjoy Him. They love Him. They don't merely obey on principle, but they grow up sacrificing for God because they love Him and obey Him.

And one of the best ways to think about this is to look at the rhythms that we teach our kids. Because we train our children to love and enjoy all kind of things. My kids are starting to love watching football on Sunday afternoons, which is hilarious because they don't even understand anything about the game.

They don't understand any of it, but they love that we do that as a family on Sunday afternoons. It's like a family ritual. We get out some snacks, we hang out together, and the real reason that they love it is they see me love it.

That's the real reason that they like it. Worship needs two things, ritual and authenticity. And that word ritual, it's a bit of a buzzword in a context like this, especially as Protestants.

[48 : 26] We don't like, generally when we talk about rituals, we're talking about dead rituals, but rituals are simply those things that we do over and over again for the sake of familiarity. They're habits, and they bring structure and intentionality.

Again, my kids know when we watch football, there's a ritual. It's Sunday afternoon. They know when we do things like family devotions. It's after dinner, before bedtime. They know when I read my Bible and spend time with the Lord.

It's in the morning. Children, here's the other thing, they actually love rituals. Think about Christmas. If you have a Christmas tradition, I bet your kids get so psyched for that stuff.

They love the tradition and the rituals. Birthdays, vacation rituals. In fact, rituals, daily rituals, are what makes much of life manageable. I mean, life's a chaotic thing.

Rituals are what makes things manageable, so we know what to expect from one moment to the next. There is some irony that we are ritualistic about almost everything in our lives, but then when we talk about ritual, when it comes to our faith, all of a sudden, we're saying, don't go legalist on me.

[49 : 29] We are ritualistic about almost everything. But because we have a weird view of authenticity, we think that we should only do things when we feel like doing them, and that's not always been helpful.

So if you teach your kids only pray when you feel like praying, the problem is they will rarely feel like praying. Rituals help, we bring in rituals to help foster the desire for things. We plan for and schedule the things that are important, and if there's something in your life that you don't have a plan for and that you don't schedule and you just fit it in where you can, it's probably not that important.

Why do you schedule your meals? Because it's really important to you. Now that said, rituals and habits without authenticity are not meaningful. But the answer isn't to avoid rituals, it's to make them authentically meaningful.

So when it comes to worship, this is the one area where you can't fake it, and you can fake it in a lot of areas. You can't fake it in worship because your kids are too smart. They know what you really get excited for.

They pick it up. If you want your kids to enjoy God and to love Him, they have to actually have a sense that you enjoy God and that you love Him.

[50 : 44] They need to see you doing it. And the only way that will happen is if you build in opportunities for it. This is why family devotions are so important. They're so important. And again, here's just a practical suggestion.

If you don't already have family devotions and all you did different after this morning is to start doing family devotions, it would be a huge step forward. Your resource sheet will give you some things to even think through.

And by family devotions, I don't merely mean just doing the thing but doing it in such a way that your kids have the impression that you actually like it. Because it's easy to do this stuff in such a way that everybody knows it's the family chore, not the family devotions, right?

They gotta have a sense that you enjoy it like you enjoy watching football on a Sunday. If nothing else, you can end the day. I try to do this with my kids.

I like to ask them, what is one thing you loved about God today? What was one thing that's really cool about God? And it gets them thinking. And then I tell them something I think about God.

[51 : 46] Man, what I love about God today is that I know that I screwed up a whole bunch of times. He actually loves me just the same. And that is amazing. It never changes.

And I'm like, I'm talking in that, with that inflection, with that excitement in front of them because I want them to see that I actually think this stuff is pretty cool. I actually like talking about it.

You know, allow your kids to talk to them about things that are coming up like the new heavens and new earth, like the way you might talk about your upcoming vacation. How do you talk to your kids about vacation?

It's going to be amazing. Do you ever talk to them about the new heavens and new earth like that? Getting them excited for it? We try to do that with our kids. We're not doing this stuff perfect again. We try to do that with our kids.

Life of faith sometimes we'll just cry and like wail because Jesus hasn't come back yet. Which is kind of funny and also beautiful at the same time.

[52 : 42] There is this like, she's starting to long for it. She's starting to really worship. And in the Bible, worship is tightly woven with the idea of sacrifice. You sacrifice for what you worship, for what you love and enjoy.

Our children will never grow up to be people who sacrifice for God if they don't actually love and enjoy Him. Think about this, parents. The greatest commandment is not to obey God. It's to love God.

If we teach our kids to obey Him but they don't actually ever love or enjoy Him, they've missed the point of obedience. And I also just want to be candid on this point.

If the primary way that our kids are hearing about Jesus and the Bible and the Gospel is through our kids' ministry program, I promise you it's not enough. And I'm probably preaching to the choir because by virtue of the fact that you're in this room, that's probably not the case.

but we have a lot of parents in our church that I know that is the case. One thing kids' ministry can never do is show your kids how much you authentically love Jesus.

[53 : 46] And kids' ministry is good. It's meant to help you. Like that whole archery thing is meant to help you. I heard someone share this metaphor the other day. It meant to help you get those arrows to hit the target but it can never replace you.

And so you need to worship. You can't take your kids where you haven't gone. Thirdly, we parent kids in the community. So fellowship and relationship, that's what we're talking about when we talk about community.

They are intrinsic to God, right? The Trinity. So there's been a sense of community since before the beginning of time in the Godhead of the Trinity. Jesus in this high priestly prayer he actually prayed that we would be brought into community between him and with him and the Father.

And so our nuclear families are a kind of community that exists to prepare us for a greater community that's to come. These relationships are going to one day go away.

The relationships of the church will never go away. They're eternal. We are preparing them for that society and so we must prepare our children to be social because God is social.

[54 : 48] A socialized person considers the needs of others, knows how to show deference, knows how to serve others, make other people feel valuable and loved. People that are not socialized, the reason that we find them hard to deal with is because actually they're inherently selfish.

They talk over others because they're always consumed with what they want to say. They grab the things that they want because they want it. Being social is being like God, selfless, tolerant, patient, constantly putting aside your own interests, with the overwhelming effect, by the way, that it makes other people like you.

I mean, when you look at the stories of Jesus, the impression you get is that he was a pretty likable guy. People followed him everywhere. They wanted to be around him. He could live in community. He knew how to commune.

So as parents, we want our kids to be that way, sociable. And it's in everyone's interest. Obviously, society thrives that way, but so will they. They will make friends easier. They will be employable, better suited to get a job.

I mean, socializing our children for society is teaching them to bear the image of God in relationship with other people. And it starts in the family. And this is one of the reasons why discipline is so important.

[56 : 02] And I'm talking about discipline as a concept. I'm not getting in the practicals of how to do it. We'll get into that in the workshops. We'll talk about this as age specific and there's room for reasonable people to disagree on how you do discipline.

But you must discipline. discipline. There's a clinical psychologist I've been following for the last year or so. Interesting guy. Kind of a controversial guy, but he's written some interesting stuff.

And he wrote a book in the chapter of one of the chapters in the book is on parenting. And the title so struck me. The title of the chapter was, Do not let your children do anything that makes you dislike them.

Now, again, we said before, it's okay to dislike them. The Bible doesn't say we always have to like our kids. But the behavior that makes us feel that way is not okay. Because no one loves your children more than you.

And if they're doing something that irritates you, it's infuriating everybody else. Right? Because no one's got more grace for your kids than you do. And so if we let our children be self-absorbed, if we tolerate them speaking disrespectfully, we're actually just training them towards selfishness, not sociableness.

[57 : 09] Again, look at how Jesus spoke. It was with respect and deference and kindness. We want our children to enter the society of people and then of the church and of one day the Trinity with the skills of God.

But it takes an enormous amount of training to do this. For the sake of time, I'm going to skip over some of this stuff. Look, every time that we see our kids do something that is inappropriate, that is rude, that is selfish, our response or lack of response is teaching them what is appropriate and where the boundaries are and what's expected of them.

They are being programmed. The question is, are they being programmed towards the image of God or are they being programmed towards selfishness? There were some teenagers in my community group years ago, and I feel comfortable saying this because this family moved away many years ago.

There were some teenagers in the community group I led, and guys, they were so badly prepared for society. They didn't look anyone in the eye. They didn't know how to ask anyone a question.

They didn't express interest in anyone. When you were talking to them, they were on their phone. Now, that stuff didn't happen overnight. What had happened is that over many years, they were allowed to perpetuate behaviors that were selfish instead of being constantly oriented towards the image of God.

[58 : 29] And what does it mean to relate to and treat other people? Discipline is how a child learns these things. Creating habits, and that's corrective when they do things wrong, but it's also formative.

It's stepping in and showing them how to relate to people, how to look people in the eye, how to be polite. And there are gospel implications for not teaching them these things.

There's gospel implications for not teaching our kids how to politely interrupt a conversation if they need to. I have some bad habits, and I'm aware of some of them. I'm sure I have some I'm not aware of.

But I have some bad habits I've been made aware of, and I realize they emphasize my selfishness, and they don't glorify God. I'm not always a good listener. I actually have a habit of sometimes speaking over and interrupting other people.

That is not Christ-like. And so what do you do when your child, regardless of age, interrupts you? If we do nothing, we're teaching them that it's okay for them to put their needs first, rather than to defer, rather than to be like Christ and put the needs of others first.

[59 : 38] Again, we are not, I'm actually, I was going to tell you how Kimberly and I deal with that. I'm not going to, because I don't want to get into the weeds of how we do these things. There's room for us to do them differently, but we must put some time into thinking about how we discipline and train our children.

And if we don't, it comes at a great cost. The psychologist who I was referencing, he said this, parents who refuse to adopt the responsibility for disciplining their children think that they can just opt out of the conflict necessary for proper child rearing.

They avoid being the bad guy in the short term, but they do not at all rescue or protect their children from fear and pain. This is a really good point. Quite the contrary, the judgmental and uncaring broader social world will meet out conflict and punishment far greater than that which would have been delivered by an aware parent.

You can discipline your children or you can turn that responsibility over to the harsh, uncaring, judgmental world. And the motivation for the latter decision should never be confused with love.

There are gospel implications at stake when our kids cannot commune. We need to be faithful to prepare them for community. And if we don't, you know, that's going to be bad for them.

[60 : 50] But it will also mar the image of God. And so we've got to be faithful. Again, here's a practical suggestion. Family dinner is one of the best ways to train your kids in sociable behavior.

And again, I think that's just a gospel thing to train them in. I would encourage you to fight for family dinners if you don't have family dinners. Because around the dinner table, you can teach your children manners.

You can teach them, not only can you ask them questions about, say, their day, you can teach them to ask questions of other people in the family. You can teach them to ask a follow-up question, to respond to what someone else says.

Those kind of skills, again, they're going to help them in life. They're also going to give glory to God because that's what he is like. Okay. Lastly, we parent kids into mission.

It is going to be our kids one day who are going to be responsible for making disciples and pushing back darkness. It's going to be on them. They're going to be the ones who have to be responsible, productive citizens for the glory of God.

[61 : 55] But the Bible is very clear that the church is a body and not everyone can do everything. And so we all have a role to play. So if we're going to prepare our kids for mission, one of the things we have to do very early on is help them know how they are uniquely gifted.

So the Bible talks at great length about that in the New Testament, knowing how you are gifted. And as parents, one of the ways we steward our children is help them see what their gifts are. You know, for every word of criticism, Scott Byrwalt has told me this, for every word of criticism, research has shown it takes three to four words of encouragement before someone feels like it's evened out.

As parents, we're sometimes often saying, don't do that. Put that down. Stop doing that. Listen to me. We're criticizing a lot. We need to be finding ways to encourage as often as we can and specifically encouraging kids in their gifting, emphasizing the grace of God.

So like with Dawson, we've noticed he's already very good at math and he's a hard worker. He's got a great work ethic. We love to rejoice in that when we see it and to call it out. Lila Faye, she is not that way, but she's very empathetic.

She's very compassionate. She, at the age of seven, knows that God made her compassionate. That's a great thing. Because what's going to happen is, as our kids get older, there's going to be needs that come up in the church.

[63 : 08] We want them to be able to see a need and step into that need in confidence. God made me for such time as this. I am wired to do this thing that needs to be done. So we have to encourage them in confidence.

And then we also need to see, help them see how to use those gifts. And thirdly, we need to demand that they use their gifts with excellence. Not in such a way that emphasizes a grade or performance.

And also, not in such a way that we actually don't care about performance at all. So those are two pitfalls. On the one side, like in an academic setting, we care a whole lot about whether our kid gets the grade.

On the other hand, there's the pitfall of maybe not caring enough about how our kid's doing. There's a middle way, and I would say a gospel way, which is, we care about the fact that our kids bring our gifts to the table, and they do their very best.

When I was in high school, I was pretty much an A student, and I took one class that challenged me like I'd never been challenged before. And my dad was such a good dad. I got a B.

[64 : 12] I never worked so hard for a B. And he told me, I've never been prouder of you. The grade doesn't matter. You did your best. And he cared about that. And he was my coach for many years.

And I remember a lacrosse game. I came off the field. We won the game. Man, he rebuked me the whole way home. He said, I don't care that you won. You played lazy out there. Every day, whatever you're going to do, do it with excellence.

That is a biblical concept. Colossians 3, whatever you do, work heartily. It's for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord, you will receive an inheritance. So again, we want to encourage our kids in their gifts.

We want to show them how to use their gifts. And we should demand from them that they are doing their best to use those gifts with excellence and then being happy to trust the fruitfulness to God, whatever is going to come from that.

The last thing I want to say, and then we'll begin to transition here, is that if our kids are going to be on mission, if they're going to help carry the load, they also need to be prepared for pain.

[65 : 18] And I want to ask you, and only you can know the answer to this, when it comes to pain and suffering as a parent, are you doing more to protect your children or are you doing more to prepare your children?

Because Jesus said that following him would involve carrying a cross. Are you preparing your child for the cross of Christ? Now, obviously, as parents, we're going to protect.

Obviously, we are. But our culture is almost entirely resistant to pain. People assume that if there's pain, something is wrong. It's taken for granted that we should do everything to avoid pain. We have to prepare our children for getting hurt when they push back darkness, because the darkness pushes back.

And if we rob our children of the opportunity to experience suffering, they will be totally unprepared to endure it in big ways later on. So much of the New Testament is about perseverance and endurance.

Are we preparing our children to endure pain? You've heard that proverbial, like the baby chick in the egg? You guys know about this? Like when it's incubating? You watch that little baby chick struggle to get out of its egg.

[66 : 23] It's exhausted. But if you help it out of its egg, it will probably die or be crippled for life. It has to struggle to survive. Our children, that's part of life. They need to learn how to suffer.

I was bullied as a child pretty brutally. I've had head surgery that's fixed some things. But when I was a kid, I had a pretty funny shaped head. The caricatures of me were drawn on the wall.

And for many years, I wondered why I wasn't more psychologically affected by that because I had friends who experienced that kind of thing and it affected them for life. One of the reasons is because my parents never let me be a victim.

They never let me be a victim. And when I was bullied, my parents always, they grieved with me, but they always seemed more concerned in how I was going to respond. And no amount of injustice to me ever was a good excuse for me responding in sin.

So my parents did not rob from me the suffering that God used in my life to prepare me for things later. Don't be too quick to isolate your children from suffering.

[67 : 29] So as parents, these are some things. I hope this has been helpful. I want to, as we transition, I want to, we're going to get into some real practical things in the workshops with some Q&A.;

I want to say one thing to the group and then I would encourage you to ask some follow-up questions. And what I want to say to us all is around the area of technology. This is one area that we as parents, I don't think as a pastor and as a parent of children myself, I don't think we're doing well because I think many of us have no idea what we're doing when it comes to technology.

And I think that that's worth saying we're one of the first generations that has had to figure out the situation we're in. We don't know what we're doing. Technology is a really good thing. I'm preaching from an iPad.

I have a phone in my back pocket right now. I work from a laptop. I love technology, but it is destroying the psychological and emotional capabilities of an entire generation because it's often being used inappropriately and without any semblance of healthy boundaries.

We have put on your resource sheet a number of articles trying to educate you and I am begging you to educate yourself on what technology is doing psychologically and emotionally to young people.

[68 : 44] Depression and suicide rates have exploded and have been conclusively linked to social media usage. You should be aware of that. Social skills are being destroyed by our addiction to our phones and that's not just our children.

Many times that's us as well. You should be aware of that. These are major issues for us as parents and we're stewards. We're going to give an account for this and I am going to ask you some questions, but I'm not going to give you the answers because again, reasonable people can disagree, but there are questions you should be wrestling with as a parent and I'm asking you, I'm asking you, I'm begging you, if you're not finding the answers to these questions, you need to find them.

How much screen time is appropriate for your child and how are you going to manage that? I'm not going to tell you how much screen time is appropriate. How much do you think is appropriate and how are you going to manage it?

How are you going to keep your children accountable to that? What is your plan? At what age should your child have a smartphone? I'm not going to tell you what age I think it is. What age do you think your child should have a smartphone?

Because be aware that when you do that, you're changing the game in their life. You're changing the game. You're giving them access to everything and maybe you want to do that and maybe there's the right time for that.

[69 : 58] There is a time for that, but when is that time, I would not let my children, and I actually think this is true of most parents, we probably wouldn't let our kids spend the night at their friend's house if we knew that at three in the morning that that child would be watching HBO.

When you give your child a smartphone, be aware you're giving them HBO at three in the morning. One click of a button. What is the age that you should give them that kind of responsibility?

And how much autonomy should your child have with a phone or computer? And how does that change with age? There's some resources if you're interested on software that can help you manage your child's autonomy so they can begin to explore the gift of technology with some controls in place.

How are you managing those things? And then lastly, how are you going to help your children deal with pornography? How are you going to help them deal with pornography?

Two assumptions you should not make. The first one is you should not make the assumption my child would never do that. In fact, if I could just suggest that you never say those words about anything because every human being is capable of any number of horrible things, including your children.

[71 : 11] Never think my child wouldn't do that. Yes, they would, and you probably would too, given the right circumstances. So don't assume that your child wouldn't look at porn. And don't assume that if it is an issue, your child will tell you.

There's so much shame on this issue. If we as parents are not proactive about trying to help them with this crisis, because it is a crisis, it's a health crisis right now. If we're not having a proactive plan to help them, they are not going to think help is available because of the shame.

They will keep it hidden. In the 80s, we treated the drug problem like this. We said, if you're addicted to drugs, you're a criminal. We've learned that doesn't help anyone.

Now we've recognized people who are addicted to drugs, maybe they made some bad decisions, but they are victims. We need to help them. Don't make your kid feel like a criminal if he or she has looked at porn.

They need your help, not just a rebuke. On that issue and on so many others, I'm asking you not to take the easy road.

[72 : 16] Take the narrow, difficult, God-glorifying road because our kids are not ours. And then when you have done everything, put your head on your pillow at night and remember that you are only responsible for faithfulness.

And you are not Jesus and you can't do everything. You can only be faithful and then he's going to take everything that you've tried to do with your kids and he is going to be the one to bring the fruit. I want to pray for us then, Lee, is going to help us transition to whatever's next.

Lord, we want to thank you for our kids. We want to thank you for the privilege of being stewards. And I pray that some of the things that I've shared, that I've tried to share, Lord, I pray that they would get into our hearts, that you would help us to see where we need to be doing things differently.

But ultimately, I do want to pray that the kids that are in the families of the people in this room, Lord Jesus, I want to pray for blessings on their lives.

And I want to pray for protection. And I want to pray that they would grow up to be fruitful, glorifying you, transformed by the gospel, worshipers, knitted into the community of the church, and that they would grow up to be partners in your mission.

[73 : 30] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.