

“Parenting is Discipling”

Matt. 28:18-20; Is. 55:10-11; 1 Cor. 15:58

Our theme for 2023 is ‘Things Above’ and we get that from Colossians 3:1-3.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

As followers of Christ, we are secure in Him and look forward to experiencing eternal blessings with Him where He is seated with the Father. In the meantime, down below, we are still exhorted to live with our hearts set above, which means doing what we do here with an eternal purpose and focus. One of our favourite verses here is 1 Cor. 10:31,

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

“Whatever we do” is added after eating and drinking which are the most common things we do. So, eat, drink, work, rest, play [‘whatever we do’] with the goal of doing that for God and to make God known. What else are we doing a lot? Parenting. How do we as followers of Jesus, parent ‘above’, parent for the glory of God? Parenting is universal. It’s been around since Adam and Eve had Cain, Abel and Seth and more that we don’t know of. Most parents want to raise healthy and wise kids who will make a difference in their generation. And whether you are Christian or not, we all teach our kids proper behaviour, manners, to respect people and get along with others. So, how can we teach our children these same things but from God’s perspective? Christian parenting is disciple making.

Matt. 28:19-20 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Who better to make disciples with than your own children? You get to mold and shape their life even in the womb. And for the next 18 years you have direct involvement in their life and even after that you will always be available to assist, help and impact them for the rest of your life. Because when they have their kids, they come back to you and say, ‘What did you do when ...?’ And of course God enables us to have a part to play in helping our grandkids follow Jesus to, Lord-willing.

This morning we want to look at Scripture and see how parenting from a ‘things above’ perspective is disciple making. And that the same habits that most parents teach them are good, but we have a greater purpose when we help them see them from God’s perspective.

For example, who doesn’t teach their kids to say, ‘thank you’? But why? How can we teach them to say thank you that points them to God?

Giving Thanks Teaches Dependency on God **(1 Thes. 5:18; Rom. 11:36)**

When do we impress upon our children/grandchildren the need to say Thank you? When they have received something by grace, that they didn’t earn or that doesn’t belong to them, which they can have or borrow. It’s as basic as getting a meal or a snack. We teach them to respond thank you

to God in prayer because ultimately everything we have comes from God. Yes the parents made or bought the food but the resources we use to purchase it come from God who gave us skills and intelligence to use for work to improve quality of life, and we get reimbursed for it. At some point if you're a Christian parent you will explain to your child how that all works. That what they have on the table or in the toy box came by grace as a gift from someone. Ultimately, life itself is a gift by grace that comes from God. We say thanks but everything we have is by grace.

Rom. 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

We can model that in our own prayers helping our kids understand everything we have comes directly or indirectly from God, who made them and gave them to us as their parents. Everything is grace – thank You Lord! Getting our kids to say thank you helps them early on to understand we need to depend on God for all things. Even difficult things?

Paul commands us in 1 Thes. 5:16,

¹⁶ Be joyful always; ¹⁷ pray continually; ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Life is not always easy. Kids experience hurt too. How do we help them to trust God? We read them God's Word about Joseph being sold by his brothers, Daniel being thrown in the lion's den, Peter denying Jesus, and other Bible narratives that show good people have problems, but God is in control. He can use these things ultimately for His glory. Teach them early that we do not live in a perfect world and to help them see what we can still be thankful for even when unpleasant things happen. God is in control. And then helping them see that when the situation clears up or is resolved. God was behind it.

Another common thing most parents do for their children ...

Is Say No to Their Wants Which Teaches Delayed Gratification **(1 Pet. 1:6-9; Heb. 11:13-16)**

Every child asks for things that they can't have at the moment or not at all. These are often not needs; they are wants. They want a toy, something to eat or drink, they want to do an activity or go somewhere and it's not possible at the time. Why do they ask these things? Because they – and we – are all selfish. We'll talk more about our sin nature in a little bit.

Children need to understand as early as possible that they just can't have anything they want, any time they want because life doesn't work like that. And it doesn't work when you get older either. Many times kids just want something more pleasant and enjoyable than the options in front of them. They want dessert or a snack but not supper. They want a toy that their friend/sibling has. They must wait, or they have to do what they'd rather not do before they get what they really want.

When we say 'No' there is usually some negative, unpleasant response that is difficult for us as parents/ grandparents to endure. But we cannot give in because they have to learn early on that 1) you can't have everything in life that you want; 2) you have to sometimes endure 'hardship' before you can receive a blessing from God. And while having to eat a few more bites of your dinner or play with a toy you do not really want to play with is hardly suffering, at their level it is. So we prepare them

that life can be disappointing, even painful and blessings may come afterwards when we say 'No' to their wants. We see this principle laid out for us in 1 Pet. 1

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The 'blessings kept in heaven for you' are all future blessings we must wait to receive. This is why we can endure now when difficulties arise because we know delayed future blessings are around the corner. We wait. Delayed gratification. And this principle needs to be learned early in life. Whether it's eating a few more bites of food to get the ice cream or doing the chore before able to go and play or finding a part time job to be able to purchase something for oneself. Kids need to learn endurance comes before blessings, and that none of us are immune to hardship.

Hebrews 11 is all about trusting God by faith in the present while waiting for future yet unseen blessings.

¹³ All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

There are many habits and disciplines that help them learn about God's principles but one of the blessings of being a follower of Jesus is we get to teach our kids directly what God says in His Word. Bible story books, reading the Bible, taking them to church and Sunday School, kid's club, youth – all these are opportunities to get them to hear God says so that they will have a Timothy experience who, (2 Tim 3:14)

learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, [mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois] ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

So when we have those opportunities to share God's Word with our kids/grandkids no matter their age,

Believe Future Fruit Will Come from Persistent Sowing of the Word **(Matt. 13:18-23; Deut. 6:6-9)**

God gave Israel through Moses some really basic guidelines about helping us instruct our children and grandchildren about the truths of God, in Deut. 6

⁶ *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

In the routines of life, find teachable moments where you can teach life-changing, God-glorifying instructions in your children's lives. Kids ask the best questions. Often the opportunities present themselves that way. Whether at home, travelling to a practice, lesson, shopping or on a hike, watching TV, be sensitive to using those moments in life where sharing about God naturally comes up or where you are helping your child understand something and it's an opportunity to show them what God says. The key for the parent/grandparent is that God's Word needs to be on our hearts before it can come out of our lips. If we're not in the Word regularly, our minds won't be ready to impress God's Word on them. The Spirit of God dwells in us, and He will prompt us to opportunities to share about God, but He needs something to work with. Our minds need to have God's Word in them so He can bring what's in our mind to the forefront.

Maybe you're thinking, 'I do that as often as I can' but there seems very little evidence of growth. But let's not forget that your child was created by God and God will complete the work He began in them. It is not up to you to save or mature your child in Christ. That is God's job. We model a Christlike life and share truth when we can. If we're persistent in sowing the seed of the Word, fruit will eventually come. Jesus said this in the parable of the soils. He explained it this way:

¹⁸ *"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ²² The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

Paul echoed this as well in Gal. 6,

⁹ *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

And here's just one more practice that we need to see through God's eyes.

Be Consistent in Discipline So They Understand Their Biggest Problem in Life – Themselves

Children misbehave. They don't listen to us. They take things that don't belong to them. They get upset when they don't get their way. They hurt others. And we need to discipline them because their behaviour is not acceptable. And everyone responds to various forms of discipline. Even the Bible addresses this:

Prov. 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

The phrase "the way he should go" means according to his/her make up, character, personality. Every child, every person is unique. God made each of us different. Which means we are

already highly valued by God in the way He created us. We do not nor will we find greater value by recreating ourselves into something we were not created to be. But we know each child learns differently which means they will need correction differently. We as parents have to figure that out along the way, which takes time.

But our kids need to understand that they misbehave because they have a sin nature. And our sin nature wants us to be first and have our own way all the time. Our kids need to learn that we all sin and fall short of God's glory. Our misbehaviour comes from our sinful bent that wants us to be gods of our own lives.

Yet God in His grace sent Jesus to die for their sins and ours and we need to help them understand that as early as possible, in a way that they can understand. We read in Eph. 2.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Whether we're two or 102, without Jesus' intervention in our lives, this is who we all are.

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

And this is the great part about helping our kids learn about Jesus. God loves them too much to leave them without a way to change their selfish ways. He sent Jesus to die for our sins, in our place, and they (we all) need to believe that His death pays the price for our sins and not just gives us a place with God in eternity, but an eternal life now. That's a new life, a new way of living. Living for Jesus and for God. God gives us His Holy spirit who comes to live in us to empower us to live this new life. A life of good works in response to what God has done for us and what God has saved for us.

Parenting is difficult period. Christian parenting has a greater purpose because you are trying to help your child come to know God and follow Jesus. Thankfully this is God's specialty. He takes our persistence and patience and seed sowing of His Word and principles and works in their life. It will not happen overnight. Reaping and sowing happen in different seasons. But here's two passages of Scripture that we need to cling to when we start to get discouraged.

Is. 55:10 *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,*

¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

When we share God's Word we are doing an eternal work. It's not just good advice; it is God's words. And God takes His Word and works through it, in His time and way. Never forget that when you struggle to see results. Keep praying that the Word planted will produce fruit.

1 Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Discipling/parenting is God's work and it is the greatest work we can do. Stick with it. Trust God.. Trust His Word. Parenting/disciple making is not in vain.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us
at olivet@rideau.net