



Family Faith

A Family Ministry Curriculum

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Session 1



What is this? beginning the conversation

SHARE

What do you want most for your child?

What do you want your children to achieve success in?

Do you care more about your child's worldly success than you do about how godly they are?

Do you know where your child is spiritually? Where are they?

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

Family Ministry is not a program. It is not another "church activity." It is the process of parents intentionally and persistently discipling their children, seeing their children as not only their children, but also current and future brothers and sisters in Christ, and realizing that parenting has the greatest impact on children than any other influence can possibly have on this earth.

Parents function as the spiritual leaders in their home whether they want to or not. That's their role, given to them by God.¹ Although primary discipleship of children has fallen to the church – which has substantially less time with children than parents do – parents remain the most influential people in children's spiritual, social, and behavioral development.² In order to reach the children and youth of this generation, a parenting paradigm shift needs to take place.

The Way It Is Now statistics



70%

1 in 4

67 hrs

40 hrs

20%

70-88%

According to a study conducted in 2007, 70 percent of young adults, ages 23 to 30, say they stopped attending church between the ages of 18 and 22.³

Seven in 10 Protestants ages 18 to 30 — both evangelical and mainline — who went to church regularly in high school said they quit attending church by age 23. And, 34 percent of those said they had not returned, even sporadically, by age 30. That means about one in four Protestant young people have left the church.⁴

With 168 hours in a week — including eight hours of sleep each night and nine hours at school each weekday — about 67 hours of prospective time still remains every week for parents to focus on their relationship with their children.⁵

For the average churchgoer, the church only has around 40 hours a year with students, which is substantially less than the 67 hours a week that parents have with their children.⁶

Most parents haven't opened a Bible with their children in the past six months. Fewer than 20 percent pray with their children at any time other than meals. Fewer still practice any form of family devotions.⁷

According to researchers, between 70 and 88 percent of Christian teens are leaving the church by their second year in college.⁸



SHARE

According to your everyday life, what do your children see are your priorities?

How often do you pray with your child other than at family meals?

How often do you read the Bible as a family?

How do you feel you are doing in raising your child to be a devoted follower of Christ?

READ

Genesis 18:19

For I have chosen [Abraham], so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 4:9-10

Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart...Teach them to your children and to their children after them. Remember the day you stood before the LORD...when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children."

Psalms 78:5-6

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Study



“According to researchers, between 70 and 88 percent of Christian teens are leaving the church by their second year in college. Imagine the alarm if nearly 90 percent of our children couldn’t read when they left high school.”⁹

If Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it,” then why are so many children leaving the church when they grow older?

“The National Study of Youth and Religion discovered that while U.S. teens are very religious, their religion is largely ambiguous. This ambiguity is due in large part to the lack of time and attention devoted to spiritual matters compared to other activities.”

Christian Smith, researcher at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, noted: “Our research suggests that religious congregations are losing out to school and the media for the time and attention of youth. When it comes to the formation of the lives of youth, viewed sociologically, faith communities typically get a very small seat at the end of the table for a very limited period of time. The youth-formation table is dominated structurally by more powerful and vocal actors. Hence...most teens know details about television characters and pop stars, but many are quite vague about Moses and Jesus. Most youth are well versed about the dangers of drunk driving, AIDS, and drugs, but many haven’t a clue about their own tradition’s core ideas. Many parents also clearly prioritize homework and sports over church or youth group attendance.”¹⁰

Refer to the question, “Do you know where your child is spiritually?” Read 1 John 2:19

Could it be that many parents are going through life convinced that their children are regenerate (*true believers*) when they really are not?

Do you *really* know where your child is spiritually?

You first must know where your child is in order to lead them to where they need to be.

Voddie Baucham Jr., pastor and professor, talking about whether or not he raises his children in sports and extracurricular activities stated:

“People turned boys into men and girls into women for most of recorded history without dragging them around town with their tongues hanging out in an effort to keep up with their overachieving, undereducated, theologically illiterate peers as they try to win trophies that will eventually gather dust in a basement somewhere.

If I teach my son to keep his eye on the ball but fail to teach him to keep his eyes on Christ, I have failed as a father. We must refuse to allow trivial, temporal pursuits to interfere with the main thing. Making the team is a tremendous achievement; however, it must be put in its proper perspective. No sports endeavor will ever be as important as becoming a man or woman of God.”

The whole purpose of this first session of *Family Faith* is to gain a proper perspective – a heavenly perspective.

In 100 years, what will matter?

Will it matter whether your child made the baseball team or cheerleading squad?

Will it matter what they scored on their ACT?

Will it matter what job they had or how much money they made?

The only thing that will matter 100 years from now is if they knew Jesus.

Acts 2:21 – “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

You will not always be able to parent your child, but you can forever be their brother and sister in Christ. Read Matthew 12:48-50.

How would your parenting change if you viewed your child as a future brother and sister in Christ?

You will not always be able to parent your child, but what you say and how you live will never leave them. What does your life say is most important to you?

It all comes down to one word: **PRIORITIES**

What are your priorities?

What should your priorities be?

What do you want your child's priorities to be?

What should be your role in helping achieve that?

Session 2



*How do I do this?
forming habits that last*

SHARE

How would you define a disciple?

What are some characteristics of the disciples of the Bible?

Who is/was the greatest Christian influence in your life? Why?

What characteristics from that person do you wish to have?

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

Being a disciple and making disciples go hand in hand. You cannot lead someone to be what you are not already. Disciples make disciples. Many parents fail to be the primary disciple makers because they fail to be disciples themselves.

First, you must be the change you want to see in your children. Do not make them question whom you belong to. In everything you do, let it be clear that you belong to Christ. Model what it means to be a true follower of Jesus.

How can you effectively disciple your child if you are not a disciple yourself? Simply put, you can't. You must study the Scriptures, pray for your children, and read. Good leaders are readers.

If you are *truly* passionate about Jesus, that passion will spread to your children. Don't just use "good parenting" as your excuse to live according to the Scriptures. Let it genuinely emanate out of who you are.

Deut. 4:9; Prov. 4:23; Col. 3:3-4

The Sad Truth you will never arrive



It is easy to get down on yourself when evaluating your life by biblical standards. Often, people see the long list of standards to holiness and think they can never reach it. Truth is, no one can reach God's standards of holiness. Romans 3:23 tells us that "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Although you may not be the person you want to be or the role model you should be to your children, it does not mean you should stop trying. Although we will never fully arrive, we should never stop pursuing God. David sinned against God but was referred to as a man after God's own heart. Repent and follow God. Why give up because of your past? Why not give God your future?

Donald Miller, public Christian speaker and author of *Blue Like Jazz*, wrote eight *true* characteristics of biblical disciples. When comparing yourself to the example the biblical disciples set, you may actually start to agree that God CAN use you.

1. You think Jesus wants to take over the government so you cut off a soldier's ear in order to get the fighting started.
2. You keep pestering Jesus about who he will give more power to in heaven.
3. You have no theological training but own a small fishing business which somehow makes you qualified because you "get it."
4. The Holy Spirit crashes into one of your mini sermons so everybody can speak different languages and outsiders think you're drunk.
5. People ask you if you know Jesus and you freak out and say no and run away.
6. You hear they killed Jesus on a cross and you figure the whole thing was a wash and you got duped.
7. You choose other disciples by playing rock, paper scissors.
8. You teach bad theology and have to have somebody else come over and correct you.²

God wants to use you. Though the disciples failed often, God used them in incredible ways to reach this world for His glory. Though you have failed and will fail, God wants to use you in incredible ways to reach your family for His glory.



SHARE

What are some areas in your life where you could be a better disciple?

What are some areas in your life that you would be disappointed of your children if they did?

Besides attending church, does your life look any different than a non-Christian's?

What have you done in the past seven days to disciple your family?

READ

Colossians 3:1-3

¹ 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.

John 8:31

...Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

John 15:8

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.

Take a moment to reflect on each of the fruits of the Spirit and evaluate how they are manifested in your marriage and parenting.

Habits can be positive or negative. Godly habits produce godly characteristics. This is true in both our individual and family lives. We will now explore some daily habits that will lead to rich, gospel-centered community in the life of not only yourself, but also your family.

“The following six habits help us to learn, remember, and practice the gospel regularly. They are intentionally theological and reflect a rich heritage that ties us to the Christians of previous generations. They are simple habits that require no advanced training. And they are helpful at every stage of life – for children and young adults, for parents and grandparents alike.”³

Some Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household⁴

1. Reciting the Apostles' Creed Together

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,

And in Jesus Christ, His only (begotten) Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell. [*Hades, spirit-world*];
The third day He rose from the dead;
He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From there He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;
The holy catholic church;
The communion of saints;
The forgiveness of sins;
The resurrection of the body;
And the life everlasting. Amen.

2. Reading Scripture Together

Scripture is the most important source for training in the Christian household. Scripture alone is sufficient to form our understanding of salvation and every aspect of Christian living (2 Tim. 3:10-17; Pss. 1, 19, 119). Jesus taught that God's Word is sufficient when he said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4). We will cover this in detail in the next session.

Habits (continued)



3. Practicing Catechisms Together

A catechism is a summary of Christian doctrine put in the form of a question and answer. A good source would be *A Catechism of Bible Teaching* (1982) written by John A. Broadus, or C.H. Spurgeon's, *A Puritan Catechism* is easily accessible at pastorchef.us/catechism

Example (from Broadus):

1. *What is it to repent of sin?*

A. Repenting of sin means that one changes his thoughts and feelings about sin, resolving to forsake sin and live for God.

2. *Does not repenting mean being sorry?*

A. Everyone who truly resolves to quit sinning will be sorry for his past sins, but people are often sorry without quitting.

4. Singing Together

As Buddy the Elf, from the movie *Elf* would say, "The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear." Though it is not completely applicable, as Christian parents, we must help one another see the value in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19) and see how such a habit can spread the joy of Christ as well as enhancing our understanding of the Gospel.

5. Morning and Evening Prayers Together

Scripture includes many examples of those who prayed at the beginning and end of the day, including Jesus (Ps. 4:8; 5:3; 57:7-8; 88:13; Mark 1:35; 14:32-34). Deuteronomy 6:1-9 suggests that it was the role of the fathers in Israel to "repeat" words of faith in God every morning and evening – "When you lie down and when you get up" (vs. 7).

6. Talking at the Table Together

The value of family mealtime has greatly diminished within today's busy culture. We must recover one of the most basic, most ancient ways of sharing life together – eating together daily – as a means of spiritual and relational formation in the Christian household.

(Matt. 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23; 24:13-35; Exod. 12; Deut. 16; Rev. 19)

Disciples make disciples. Make a conscious effort to implement daily habits that will bring both yourself and your family closer to Christ. As you implement these habits, your children will see that a relationship with Christ is of primary importance in this life, because it is the only thing that matters for the next life.

Session 3



How do I do this? faith talks & faith walks

SHARE

How often do you have family time?

If you do have family time, what does it usually consist of?

Do you read the Bible and pray as a family? Why or why not?

Do your children ever pray or lead family devotions? Could you see them doing this?

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

To the Ephesians, Paul specifically commanded fathers not to simply be good examples for their children but to provide their children with training “of the Lord.”

Every day, or at least once a week, have a family worship time. Bridge the gap between church and home by bringing worship and Bible study into your home.

The purpose of faith talks is to restore Christian parents to their God-ordained role as teachers of God’s Word in their children’s lives.¹ People make time for what is most important. Carve out time each day to dive into the Word with your family. A wonderful resource guide can be found at pastorchef.us/kids-library.

Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4

What is it?



John Bunyan said, "Concerning the spiritual state of his family; [the father] ought to be very diligent and cautious, doing his utmost both to increase faith where it is begun, and to begin it where it is not. Therefore, he must diligently and frequently bring before his family the things of God, from His Holy Word, in accordance with what is suitable for each person. And let no man question his authority from the Word of God for such a practice."²

Biblical teaching should primarily come from home. Faith Talks, intentionally reading the Bible together as a family, must rightfully bridge the gap between church and home.

What are Faith Talks?

Faith talks are a designated time, at least once per week, for the household to gather for prayer and to study a biblical truth together. This household gathering may include not only parents and children but also other individuals who have been invited to share this time with the family.

The purpose of faith talks is to restore Christian parents to their God-ordained role as teachers of God's Word in their children's lives.³

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 (ESV)

¹"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, ²that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. ³Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

⁴"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Study



Who was Moses talking to in Deuteronomy 6?

What blessings are promised if these things are done?

This commission for parents to teach their children the Word of God was given to all of Israel, just as the Great Commission was given to the whole church to reach the whole world (Matt. 28:19). Every Christian parent should reap the blessings that come from teaching the Word of God to their children. There is no greater gift than seeing one's own child come to know their Heavenly Father. Not only that, but to see one's own child perpetuate the God-ordained role of teaching the things of God to the generations to come.

There is no such thing as cultural or familial faith. "Family Faith" cannot be passed down through relational osmosis. It must intentionally and systematically be taught and lived out in front of and amidst one's own family.

Take a moment to map out times available for your family to have Faith Talks (*family devotions*). Remember, people make time for what is most important to them. Take note if some activities need to be removed from yours and your children's everyday lives in order to accomplish this goal.

Sample Family Faith Talk



My wife's family has always tried to do a Faith Talk (*family devotion*) every night. They still do them to this day, when the family is together, even though their children are grown. Because of these faith talks, my parent in-laws have raised three godly women who are articulate in their faith and live Christ-exalting lives.

Below is a sample of a Faith Talk. Each family is different, but there are crucial characteristics that are essential for proper discipleship within Faith Talks.

1. Decide who is leading

The parents do not have to lead the discussion each night. It is beneficial for your children to step into this role, with your guidance, so that they can develop their skills to adequately lead outside of the home.

2. Start with an activity

Do some sort of activity together as a family. You could play a game together or ask each other questions. For example, you could ask each other to say what their favorite thing about Christmas is, if close to Christmas time.

3. Sing a song

As a family, sing a song of worship together. It is an amazing and beautiful thing to worship together as a family.

4. Read Scripture

Scripture should be the focal point of the Faith Talk. Always have a time of devotion in Faith Talks. Make a habit of your children opening their Bibles and reading the passages out loud. Other resources like the book "*The-Ology*" can be used to facilitate this portion as well. A great resource guide can be found at pastorchef.us/kids-library.

5. Discuss the Scripture

This is where the teaching comes in. Find out what your children think the passages are saying, teaching them to discern the Word of God. Also, discuss the application of the Scripture to yours, your children's, and your family's lives.

6. Pray

Close in prayer together as a family. It is beneficial to have each member of the family pray out loud. It may help to make a habit of the order of prayer. Have Mom open, children in between, and Dad close. Prayer not only draws a family closer together and to God, but praying out loud teaches your children how to pray to their Heavenly Father.

Faith Walks



Faith Walks are discussions in the course of daily life that turns a child's attention toward the presence of the gospel and the providence of God in every part of life. Faith Walks are a part of the ongoing process of sensing God's presence within everyday life.

"Faith walk moments remind us that because God is working all things together for the good of those who love him, even the most mundane events of life can call attention to God's glory and His story."⁴

Deuteronomy 6:7 says, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

In every situation you possibly can, impart some biblical truth or allow your child to see that God is working. Every question that arises in the daily walk of your life is an opportunity for you to form your child's faith. Utilize the opportunities that God has given you.

Conversations about God in your day-by-day life

Practice: How can you bring these situations to conversations about God?

At the zoo

Drive by a wreck

Child talks about non-Christian friend

Child's sports team wins

You pass a homeless person

Session 4



Adoption spiritual orphans

SHARE

Do you know any young people that do not have Christian parents? Who?

Are you connected in any way to their lives? How?

If it is the parents' primary responsibility to be the primary disciple makers of their children, what about those who do not have Christian parents? How are they to be disciplined?

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

To bypass the orphan in favor of focusing on whole and healthy families is to neglect a heartbeat that has long marked the rhythms of God's redemptive plan (*Ex. 22:22; Isa. 1:17; James 1:27*). None of us are natural-born children of God; there are only ex-orphans who have been brought into God's family through divine adoption (*Rom. 8:15; 9:4; Gal. 4:5*).¹

Adoption is not only a mandate for religion that God our Father finds as pure and faultless (*James 1:27*), but it is a truth that emanates from every Christian (*Eph. 1:5*). Not a single person on earth has been born into the family of God on their own merits. The only thing we have all been born into is sin (*Rom. 5:19*). And because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, we can all be adopted into the family of God. This truth should overflow into every aspect of our lives, especially in reaction to those without parents, as well as spiritual orphans, those without Christian parents.

Theology of Adoption



You may have already realized your need to be the primary disciple-maker of your own child, so reach out to those children and teenagers who do not have the blessings of being in a Christian home. Not only are your children your future brothers and sisters in Christ, but also are orphans and spiritual orphans.

Foster parenting and adoption are amazing steps of faith that may need to be taken in your life in order to aid in the discipleship of the parent/less. If that is unattainable, constantly seek practical ways to speak truth into the lives of your children's friends, those you coach, relatives, and anyone you know that is far off.

Let's live this life as if we're certain of the next.

Read

Galatians 4:5 – "...to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Romans 8:15 – "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Romans 9:4 – "...the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises."

Ephesians 1:5- "...he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—"

Article 12 of the Westminster Confession of Faith:

All those that are justified, God [bestows], in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as by a Father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.

Share



Since you have been adopted by God, what is keeping you from reaching out to spiritual orphans?

In what ways can you have a godly influence on the young people that do not have Christian parents?

Adoption is, on the one hand, *gospel*. In this, adoption tells us who we are as children of the Father. Adoption as gospel tells us about our identity, our inheritance, and our mission as sons of God. ²

Study

Identity

Our identity is found in the One we belong to. Our adoption by God means that we are His. Who we are is who we are in Christ.

Colossians 3:3 – *“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”*

How does your life reflect this truth? How can you express this truth to spiritual orphans?

Inheritance

We have been given a kingdom that cannot be shaken (*Heb. 12:28*). We have received forgiveness of sins, life everlasting, and an eternity with God, none of which we deserved but which God poured out freely.

Romans 8:17 – *“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”*

What does it mean that we are co-heirs with Christ? How does your life reflect that truth?

Study (continued)



Mission

As a parent, you know that your child must obey what you command. As adopted children of God, we have been given a command that we must obey.

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

Do you always obey this mission that God has called you to? How can you?

Titus 2:1-8,11-15

¹ You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. ² Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

³ Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

¹⁵ These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

We must purposefully find ways to be there for, speak truth into, listen to, and care for spiritual orphans.

Session 5



Adoption physical orphans

SHARE

What do you appreciate about the way you were raised?

What are your favorite things about your parents?

Imagine for a moment if you were never able to have those moments.

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

“Adoption isn’t charity – it’s war. The gospel of Jesus Christ means our families and churches ought to be at the forefront of the adoption of orphans close to home and around the world. As we become more attuned to the gospel, we’ll have more of a burden for orphans. As we become more adoption-friendly, we’ll be better able to understand the gospel. Encouraging adoption - whether we adopt or whether we help others adopt – can help us peer into the ancient mystery of our faith in Christ and can help us restore the fracturing unity and the atrophied mission of our congregations.

Adoption is not just about couples who want children – or who want more children. Adoption is about an entire culture within our churches, a culture that sees adoption as part of our Great Commission mandate and as a sign of the gospel itself. ¹

Pure Religion



Those who have loving parents cannot imagine a life without them. Yet, the sad reality is that many around the world have to face the reality of having no parents at all.

Religion gets a bad rap because it is often practiced for selfish motives. Jesus attacked the Pharisees for this very thing (Matt. 23). He attacked this sort of religion because it is the very opposite of the reason He came.

Philippians 2:5-8

⁵ *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

⁶ *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!*

James 1:27

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Most people who practice Christianity do a great job of helping the poor, visiting shut-ins, and keeping oneself from being polluted by the world, yet they fail to do one of the essential things that James, the brother of Jesus, said pure religion consists of – adoption. Last session, we observed the need for spiritual adoption, but there is just as great a need for physical adoption.

Imagine for a moment if every person who said they were a Christian actually practiced true religion. Imagine if each Christian gave sacrificially as Christ gave of himself. Imagine if every Christian shared what they had been blessed with, which has all been given by God anyways. Imagine if every Christian truly looked after orphans by taking them into their very homes and adopting them into their very families as God has done for them.

What would world poverty/hunger look like?

What would the crime rate be?

What would the status of orphans be?

The answer to each should be *drastically less* if not *non-existent*.

Study



Take a moment to think about Joseph of Nazareth. Although his situation is somewhat different, he was an adopted father and great example nonetheless. Adoption requires sacrifice. Joseph gave sacrificially through his adoption. Joseph hurt socially through his adoption. Through his adoption, Joseph gave time and energy that could have been used selfishly. He modeled God's fatherhood perfectly.

"God's fatherhood is pictured for us as a tumultuous, fighting kind of fatherhood – the kind that rips open the seas and drowns armies. Joseph probably had no idea that he was a living reenactment of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. He probably never thought about the fact he was serving as an icon of his God. He just did what seemed right, in obedience to the Word of God. But he was participating in something dramatic – in every sense of the word.

When we adopt – and when we encourage a culture of adoption in our churches and communities – we're picturing something that's true about our God. We, like Jesus, see what our Father is doing and do likewise (*John 5:19*). And what our Father is doing, it turns out, is fighting for orphans, making them sons and daughters." ²

It is no wonder James wrote, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans..." He saw it perfectly modeled by his earthly father, Joseph.

SHARE

What are some worries you would have about adopting?

In what ways was Joseph's situation similar to your worries?

If not adoption, would you consider foster parenting? Why or why not?

Study (continued)



“Protecting children means rolling back the curse of fatherlessness, inasmuch as it lies within our power to do so.

When parents care for a child, their child, they’re picturing something bigger than themselves. They are an icon of a cosmic reality – the reality of the Father “from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (*Eph. 3:15*).

Joseph’s rescue of Jesus isn’t the first time the adoption of a child is tied to the exodus event. David sings about God as “Father of the fatherless and protector of widows” who “settles the solitary in a home,” tying this reality to God marching before his people through the wilderness towards *Canaan* (*Ps. 68:5-6*). God shows this is the kind of God He is. He’s the kind of God, the prophet Hosea tells us, of whom we cry out, “In you the orphan finds mercy” (*Hos. 14:3*).

God everywhere tells us He is seeking to reclaim the marred image of Himself in humanity by conforming us to the image of Christ who is the image of the invisible God. As we become Christlike, we become godly. As we become godly, we grow in holiness – differentness from the age around us. This God-imagining holiness means, therefore, an imaging of God’s affections, including his love for orphans.”³

**What is keeping you from adopting or fostering?
Practice true religion – look after orphans.**

How can you help create a culture of adoption in your church and community?

What are some things you can do to start right now?

The Gospel how it impacts parenting

The gospel means good news.

Although we respond to the gospel with faith and repentance, it is not about something we do, rather it's about what God has done.

The most effective Christian parenting is done by increasingly seeing all of life through the lens of the gospel. Effective parents never assume their children understand the gospel. They continually teach and model the truth of Scripture to their children.

There is such a fine line in teaching the gospel and teaching biblical morality from the gospel. If all parents do is teach their children to behave themselves, all they've taught them is morality, and morality will not save anyone. Only a relationship with Jesus can save (*Acts 4:12*).

It would be a shame to teach a child to obey their parents and fail to teach them to obey their Father in Heaven. The Gospel brings good news to parenting. It is initiated by grace and is sustained by grace. Though we mess up, He takes us back. Praise the Lord!

During this session, we will evaluate the characteristics of the gospel and see how it impacts parenting.¹

8 Aspects of the Gospel Applied to Parenting¹

1. Chosen Before the Foundation of the World (*Ephesians 1:4*)

Your child's salvation is outside of your control. Despite that fact, God uses you as the means to draw your child to Him. The most important thing in your parenting is to please God, not your children. Child centered parenting is child idolatry. The best way for fathers to be centered is to be centered on the Father.

What do you think about that statement?

2. The Incarnation

He that exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (*Matt. 23:12*). Christ humbled Himself as our substitute (*Phil. 2*). He humbled Himself because of our arrogance. He had to die because we fail to worship the God that created us. Because Christ humbled himself, we do not receive what we deserve – the eternal punishment for our sins. We should thank God every day for Christ's humility.

8 Aspects (continued)



We should model Christ's humility in parenting, and we should be vigorous in helping our children put on humility. The way we humble ourselves is by obeying God – giving Him full control of our lives and our parenting.

What are some ways in which you can exercise humility more in your parenting?

3. Christ's Imputed Righteousness (*Rom. 3:22; 1 Cor. 1:30*)

Jesus came and lived a sinless and perfect life. When we believe the gospel, God imputes that obedience to us. Christ died to please the Father first and us secondly.

How does this apply to parenting?

We're all sinners, and we all parent imperfectly.

What's our hope?

It's grace.

We can and must flee to Christ continually for forgiveness and grace in our time of need, which is daily. Our children must see us doing that. You don't want your children to see you wallowing in guilt. Your parenting isn't about you measuring up – Christ measured up in your place. God will often use your failings more than your qualities.

4. Substitutionary Atonement (*Isaiah 53*)

The cross is crucial to parenting. The cross shows us how God sees our sin and our children's sin. It is the measure of God's holiness. Truth be told, we deserve crucifixion. We don't deserve a break today – we deserve crucifixion. Through Jesus' substitutionary atonement, we see God's holy hatred of evil – to the extent of sacrificing his only begotten Son.

What are some heart attitudes that are unholy in your children?

(Selfishness, Complaining, Lying, Rebellion against authority, etc.)

You must go after heart attitudes in your children that aren't right. The substitutionary atonement gives us compassion and grace when we see the cross. We see our own sin first of all. We see our children's sin second. It motivates us to serve our children in the way that God has served us – not just in feelings, but with action.

God has loved you this way, how can you love your spouse and children in this way?

(Makes you prioritize the things you do. Golf, video games, extra work, etc.)

8 Aspects (continued)



5. Christ's Resurrection from the Dead

Christ's resurrection is our justification. It produces our new birth and begins the new creation within our children and us.

Our children are not born innocent and good. They are born dead in their trespasses of sins – children of wrath upon birth (*Ps. 51:5; Eph. 2:2-3; Proverbs 22:15; Gen. 8:21*).

You cannot protect your children into the Kingdom of God.

To only keep kids away from bad things takes away the gospel. Some have the mindset of, "If I keep them from bad movies, etc., my kids will become Christian." Regeneration is what our children need – heart change. We cannot tell absolutely that our children are regenerate. Morality itself is no indication by itself of regeneration. We have faith in our own and our children's resurrection because of Jesus' resurrection (*1 Cor. 15*).

What are your thoughts on this?

6. Ascension into Heaven

Jesus has been raised to God's right hand. He has been given all authority. He is interceding for us. There are no accidents in life if we really believe that.

Romans 8:28 – "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Nothing that is taking place in your parenting is an accident. God's entire wrath was poured out on His son. God's hand in our lives is for our good and from His loving-kindness. There are no accidents with God. It is all designed to draw us closer to God the father.

How should this impact your parenting?

8 Aspects (continued)



7. Pentecost (Acts 2)

This is where the pouring out the Holy Spirit took place. “Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.” (Acts 2:43)

The Holy Spirit comes to convince us and our children of the gospel. The Holy Spirit comes to change our hearts of stone to flesh. We know that the Holy Spirit is in our children when they have saving faith in Him. We can be completely confident of that.

Saving faith is not mental ascension to truths, but it's conviction of the truths, and conviction always motivates action. He is a HOLY Spirit. He changes those He indwells. When a child is born again, they will be changed from the inside out. The things of God will become their desire. It will be shown in their hearts and lives. Sometimes it's hard to tell when this is taking place, but we must rely and cling to the Holy Spirit.

Do you see the Holy Spirit at work in your children's lives? If so, in what ways?

8. Christ's Returning Glory

Christ's return informs us of the ultimate end goal of parenting. The goal of parenting is not that they will get a good job or that they will marry well.

Parents exist to prepare their children for the Day of Judgment.

100 years from now you won't care whether your child graduated from Harvard or had a great career – all that will matter is if they knew Jesus. Each one of us will give an account of our lives. Part of that accounting will be our parenting.

We must walk in the grace and fear of God. Our only job is faithfulness, not results. God is the one that brings results. God only asks that we are faithful, not for results. If we are faithful, God brings the results.

The Gospel is the center of parenting. The deeper we go in the gospel truths, the deeper our parenting will go. How deep are you willing to go?

Notes



Session 1

1. Wayne Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry [Again]* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), p.24.
2. Randy Stinson, Timothy Paul Jones, eds., *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 2011), p. 17.
3. Wayne Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry [Again]* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), pp.26-27.
4. <www.lifeway.com/lwc/article_main_page/0%2C1703%2CA%25253D165949%252526M%25253D200906%2C00.html?>>
5. Randy Stinson, Timothy Paul Jones, eds., *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 2011), p. 159.
6. <<http://www.whatisorange.org/orange-strategy/>>
7. Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), p.60.
8. Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Driven Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2007), p.12.
9. Ibid., 12-13.
10. Ibid., 13.

Session 2

1. Here are some suggested resources: Jim and Jerolyn Bogear, *Faith Legacy: Six Values to Shape Your Child's Journey* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009); William Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2009); Rob Rienow, *Visionary Parenting: Capture a God-Sized Vision for Your Family* (Nashville: Randall House, 2009); Kelli B. Trujillo, *Faith-Filled Moments: Helping Kids See God in Everyday Life* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009); Steve Wright with Christ Graves, *ApParent Privelege* (Raleigh; InQuest Ministries, 2008); John Younts, *Everyday Talk: Talking Freely and Naturally About God with Your Children* (Wapwallopen: Shepherd Press, 2005).
2. <<http://donmilleris.com/2011/03/29/ten-characteristics-of-a-disciple/>>
3. Randy Stinson, Timothy Paul Jones, eds., *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 2011), p. 179.
4. Ibid., 179-191.

Session 3

1. Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), pp.151-160.
2. Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Driven Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2007), p.96.
3. Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), p.154-155.
4. Ibid., 162.

Session 4

1. Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), p.143
2. Russell D. Moore, *Adopted For Life* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2009), p. 17-18.

Session 5

1. Russell D. Moore, *Adopted For Life* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2009), p. 18-19.
2. Ibid.,73.
3. Ibid., 69-70.

Session 6

1. All information is from a message delivered by Bill Farley at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's *Connecting Church and Home* conference.