

“GOOD NEWS FOR YOUR KIDS!”

1/31/16

Last week, we talked about parenting being complex. So, guess where I’m going today. If you guessed a plea for simplicity, you got it! The one practical question I get asked often by parents is this: *How should I teach the Gospel (the Good News about Jesus Christ) to my kids?* My answer is usually ... *simply!* Keep it simple!

Pitfalls, both real and imagined, intimidate virtually every parent who thinks about this responsibility. On one hand, there’s the danger of oversimplification. On the other hand, we don’t want it to be too difficult, so that it’s way over their heads (and ours)! So, what’s the best approach to take?

If you’ve ever been a parent who is somewhat intimidated by the task of teaching God to your children, let me say this: There’s no need to be! *The Gospel is simple ... and we need to present the simple Gospel ... simply.* Listen, first, look to what Jesus’ attitude was (is) toward our kids...

Some people brought children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples scolded the people. <sup>14</sup>When Jesus noticed this, he was angry and said to his disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup>I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." <sup>16</sup>Then he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on each of them, and blessed them. – Mark 10:13-16 (TEV)

Folks, Jesus loved the little children; and, Jesus wants us to love the children, too! In fact, he wants us to *have* and to *understand* and to *pass along* the simple child-like faith that he found in children! They got to know him ... and they loved him! *We, as parents, need to be teaching our children to do the same—to get to know him ... and love him!* Let’s learn together about this task today (*using outline*). Again, the story itself is really pretty simple; but, first let me say this: *When it comes to sharing God with your kids...*

**TAKE YOUR TIME ... AND BE THOROUGH!** Sharing God with your kids is about something ... *eternal*—not just for this life! So, let’s make sure that we treat this responsibility accordingly...



In a past advertisement from the ‘Cap Times’ paper, that comes in our daily State Journal, this particular box caught my eye...

This got me to thinking: Parenting is kind of like physical fitness, isn't it? It's not something we can leave alone too long ... *without consequences*. And, the effort to maintain physical fitness ... is *never-ending ... just like parenting!* Listen to what one of my previous long-time members has to say about this: **(Eddis Olson video clip...)**

Folks, that was Eddis Olson—long-time member & long-time mom ... letting us know that PARENTING IS A LIFELONG PURSUIT! So, *take your time and be thorough*; you don't have to rush through this thing; it won't be over any time soon...

One last thing I want to share with you is this: Keep in mind that *nothing a parent can do will actually guarantee your child's salvation*; we cannot believe for them by proxy. Genuine faith is prompted by God's work in a child's heart (John 6:44-45) ... and true assurance of that salvation is the Holy Spirit's work (Romans 8:15-16). *Our part ... is to always be about ... pointing them toward Christ—a job that never ends...*

**TEACH THEM 'THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.'** Don't *shortchange* your kids ... by taking too many *shortcuts*! Some in the Church today are quite frankly too prone to this kind of 'gospel reductionism,' I'll call it... Too many evangelicals are obsessed with finding out how little of God's truth a person can believe ... and still get to heaven! *Don't go there ... O.K.?* It's like this...

In looking to your parental responsibility to teach your kids about God, **DON'T JUST DECIDE TO HAND THEM A TRACT ...** and that's it!

**“Here kid; read this, study this; when you've memorized it, everything'll be O.K.!”**

No! As parents, we need to resist this kind of thinking! Going back to Deuteronomy 6:6-7, *this sort of constant, faithful, diligent teaching that God requires of parents ... is incompatible with a minimalist approach to the gospel!*

Also, parents teaching their kids about God has to be *personal*; it needs to come out of your personal relationship with Christ! If it's personal—*real personal*—then your kid's going to know just how important the Gospel is ... and begin to live it. **If it matters to you, it'll matter to them.** Remember: *the Gospel is more caught than taught...* They've got to see the Good News in you, before they'll consider living the life themselves... And, you need to teach them *everything about who Jesus is*, not just a part of it...

Again, **DON'T JUST HAND YOUR KIDS A TRACT!** That's *impersonal!* Instead, *take your time, be thorough* and teach them *all* they need to know about life with God—the *whole counsel of God!* This leads me to the next step; here' a whole class in a nutshell...

**HIGHLIGHT THOSE THINGS MOST CRUCIAL TO THE GOSPEL!**

- **Teach them about God's holiness...**

Psalms 111:10a (NIV) says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom....” **This isn’t a fear like ‘The Cowardly Lion’**; rather it’s a healthy respect for God’s holiness—for not wanting to offend God’s holiness... We teach our kids to respect other things in life, from birth; why not teach them about God’s holiness, too?

- **Show them their sin...**

Romans 3:23 (NIV) says plainly, “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....” I used to hate when my parents told me this (a parental tactic to get me to behave?), but we need to teach our kids that ‘misbehavior is not just an offense against Mom &/or Dad; it’s also *sin* against a holy God (Exodus 20:12, Obey your parents). But, we can’t fix this *sin nature* in us by ourselves...

- **Instruct them about Christ and what he has done...**

You have to bring your kids to understand that God made a way, through Jesus ... for this tendency to ‘sin’ to be taken care of! Folks, *Jesus is the heart of the Gospel message* ... so a focus on Jesus should be at the heart of all your spiritual instruction in the home! 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV) says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Jesus took our place ... and paid our debt, so we could be O.K. with God; teach them that!

- **Tell them what God demands of sinners...**

Acts 17:30 (NIV) is where to find it: “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” Repent = 180° turnaround; *it’s a transformation of the heart!* It’s the cocoon/butterfly thing; has your life been transformed like that? This is what you need to teach your kids... It’s a transformation from hate/love, from bitterness/love, from cynicism/love, from doubting/faith, from no hope/great hope ... *in Christ!* When Christ is allowed into our lives, the transformation is as real as a cocoon transforming into a butterfly—something you can see, but REPENTENCE is the key here; teach your kids that!

- **Advise them to count the cost carefully...**

Mark 8:34-35 (NIV) says, “Then [Jesus] called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” *Don’t downplay the hard demands of Christ*; don’t portray the Christian life as something it’s not—a life of ease, free from hardship. Following Christ *always involves sacrifice*: Mike Slaughter always tells his congregation down at Ginghamburg, “Being a Christian won’t cost you something; it’ll cost you everything!” If our kids are to know the life in Christ that God desires for them, God needs *all of them* for that to happen; they need to know that!

- **Urge them to trust Christ with their lives!**

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NIV) tells us, “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.” Have you ever felt strongly about telling your kids something they really needed to hear—either *begging them not to do something* for their own good ... or *urging them to do something* for their own good? That’s what we’re talking about here...

I was taught a long time ago (youth ministry training) that *if we don't win our young people to Christ by the time they're 18 years old, 80% of them will never come to know Christ!* If that doesn't motivate you, I don't know what will! *We must urge our kids to trust Christ with their lives; he is their only hope!* Finally...

**TEACH YOUR CHILDREN DILIGENTLY...** Today, all of this may seem somewhat intimidating as parents... You may be thinking: *Where was all of this when I needed it 20 years ago? Or, I'm in trouble; this has not been a part of my parenting to date; is it too late?* The GOOD NEWS is this: *It's not too late!* Why? (Eddis Olson) Because, *it's a lifelong pursuit...* But, let me also say this: If you think your grasp of scripture and spiritual truth is insufficient to teach these things to your kids ... You'd better start learning immediately! The 2016 NT Challenge is a good way to learn the basics of the Christian faith, through *personal Bible reading*... And there will be other opportunities around here for your personal spiritual growth as well...

We really do care about your children; we really do care about meeting your child's greatest need! And, we care about parents being prepared ... to point their kids toward Christ, when no one else will! *Parenting is an opportunity that we don't want to slip by, folks... So, let's make the most of it ... together!*