

Parenting as Christ's Ambassadors

Addressing the Heart of Your Child & Trusting God to Regenerate

Adult Training Seminar Session Three – Jeremy Jackson 1-28-18

To convince you that the Lord Jesus is your all-sufficient shepherd in commissioning you as His ambassador to your children so that you will faithfully fulfill your lifelong parental ministry for Christ's glory

Opening Discussion

- Would you say that most of your parenting interventions focus on your children's behavior?
- either what they are doing or what they have done?

1. What is the Heart?

- Created after God's Own Heart (Acts 13:22)
- A Figure of Inaccessibility (Jon 2:3)
- The Center of Your Life (Pro 4:23)
- The Center of our Emotions/Intellect/Morals/Activity (Pro 15:15; Mark 11:23; John 14:1; 1 Pet 1:22)

2. Why is the Heart so important to Address?

- Because of how it relates to salvation
 - The heart is the seed bed of sin (Jer 17:9; Pro 26:23; Mat 15:19-20)
 - The heart is known by God (Ps 44:21; John 2:24-25)
 - The heart can be renewed by God (Jer 31:33; Ez 36:26; Rom 10:10)
 - The heart can be hardened against God (Ps 95:8; Pro 28:14; 2 Chr. 36:13).
 - The heart reveals a true vs. false convert (Heb 11:4; 1 Sam 13:14; Mat 15:8; 22:37)
- Because of how it relates to sanctification
 - Our spiritual growth flows out of our hearts (Gal 5:22-23; 1 Tim 3:2-6)
 - Our hearts will be changed from the inside (1 Pet 3:3-4; Ps 51:6,10)

3. How not to Address the Heart?

- By focusing on behavior
- By threatening, manipulating, or using guilt
- By finding our identity in our children
- By needing to prove ourselves through the raising of "successful" children
- By possessions becoming more important than our children's hearts
- By provoking them to anger
- By making it all about keeping the rules
- By allowing them to figure it out themselves
- By not paying attention to the heart of your child

4. How to Address the Heart

- By looking to Jesus as our model (Phil 2:5-8)
- By doing it in the strength of another (2 Cor 5:17; Col 1:27)
- By walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16)
- By empathizing with their weakness (Ps 103:13; 2 Cor 12:9)
- By being observant (Heb 13:17)
- By probing their hearts / asking good questions (Pro 20:5)
- By feeding their heart (Deut 6:6; Pro 22:17-18)
- By directing their heart (Pro 4:23; 16:9; Col 4:6)
- By listening to their heart (Pro 23:29)
- By guarding our own heart (Pro 4:23)

5. What if you have not been addressing the Heart?

- Repent (1 John 1:9)
- Embrace God's Grace (2 Cor 9:8; 12:9)
- Embrace your calling (2 Corinthians 5:14-21)

Key Points:

- You cannot change your child. You can prepare and help your child to seek God and see his/her own heart.
- Getting to the heart of your child begins by looking at your own heart.
- We are God's instrument of grace and change in our child's life.
- If we are not looking at our own hearts as parents, we will turn moments of ministry into a moment of anger; we will personalize it; we will become an adversary; and we will settle for a quick, temporary solution that does not change the heart

God never calls you to a task without giving you what you need to do it. He never sends you without going with you. Tripp-Parenting

Resource Annex

Practical applications for parenting the heart

1. Focus on the underlying heart condition rather than the behavior alone.
 - You have been yelling at your sister a lot today. Let's talk about what is going on inside your heart when that is happening.
2. Address heart issues when the heart is soft.
 - You've had a hard time listening today. What do you think is happening in your heart that is keeping you from obeying?
3. Use God's word to intervene, but not as a weapon.
 - I know that you are angry, but the Bible tells us "in your anger, do not sin." Let's talk about what is going on in your heart.
4. Do daily heart "check-ups."
 - Did you have any heart struggles today? Did you notice any times today when you felt God speaking to your heart?
5. Use "heart language" all the time – in good times and bad.
 - When you help clear the table without being asked, I can see the kindness like Jesus coming from your heart.
6. Study God's word together.
 - Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

When we see our children habitually disobeying, we need to pray for discernment.

- First, we need to prayerfully examine ourselves to discover what we might be doing that is contributing to their disobedience. What mistakes are we unwittingly making? What is wrong with our own hearts that needs to be uprooted?
- Next, we need to confess those sins to our children and repent. We need to ask their forgiveness for our negligence, our own disobedience, our anger, our pride, or whatever other sins the Holy Spirit reveals to us. We need to restore our relationship with them.
- Then we need to ask the Lord to help us address the root of our children's rebellion and disobedience. What is nourishing the "weed" of disobedience? What is the outward symptom of disobedience alerting us to in their hearts? That's what we need to gently uncover and confront.
 - Is disobedience springing from a root of pride in the child's heart? Does he believe he is better equipped to govern his life than we are, by God's grace? Is he, by his actions and attitudes, saying that he knows better than God what is good for him? Does he think he deserves a life of ease and self-gratification?
 - Is his disobedience the fruit of fear in his heart? Does he have a hard time trusting God to work out His perfect will through the people and circumstances He has sovereignly placed in his life? Is he afraid he will lose something he values if he submits to you? Is a fear of the opinions of others leading him to rebel?
 - Is a bitter heart manifesting itself in disobedience? Do resentment and anger — against you, God, or others — lead the child to openly rebel?

Every time our children disobey:

We have an opportunity to take them and their fallen hearts to the cross.

At the root of their disobedience is a failure to embrace the gospel, a failure to humble themselves before the great and loving God who loves us and gave His only Son in order to save us and make us new creatures in Him. Disobedience is a failure to respond to His gracious forgiveness with the same sort of forgiveness of others, and a failure to avail themselves of the grace and power that makes us new creatures in Christ.

When our children disobey, we need to take them to Jesus. We need to lovingly soak them in the gospel, helping them understand how much they are loved, how secure they are in that love, how fully they can trust the God who loved them enough to give His only Son to save them.

Then we need to step back and let the Holy Spirit do His work in their hearts.

Personal Reflection:

1. How well do you communicate the awe of God to your children?
2. What prevents you from speaking about God to your children in the course of the day?
3. Do you think you spend enough time speaking about God and his word to your children?
4. Do you spend enough time with God and his word? What can you do to increase this time?
5. How do you view the moments of conflict and sin that arise with your child?
6. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. How does Jesus treat us when we come to him with our sins and weaknesses? How should this inform the way you treat your child in relation to his/her sin and weaknesses?

Getting to the Heart of your Children

Use these questions, in order, next time your child needs correction.

What was going on?

What were you thinking and feeling as it was happening?

What did you do in response?

Why did you do it? What were you seeking to accomplish?

What was the result?

Some Suggested Resources – STUDY YOUR BIBLE

(These are wise counselors but not perfect counselors. You still have to walk by faith)

“Gospel Powered Parenting” by William P. Farley

An excellent book on directing your heart and goals towards God’s heart and goals

“Parenting: The 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family” by Paul Tripp

“Everyday Talk” by John Younts

Talking to your kids about Christ through daily events and activities of life

“Shepherding a Child’s Heart” by Tedd Tripp

The single best book on parenting focused on imparting a vision to go after their hearts not just behavior

“Instructing a Child’s Heart” by Tedd Tripp

Very helpful application of his first book, “Shepherding a Child’s Heart” with emphasis on the gospel

“Your Child’s Profession of Faith” by Dennis Gundersen

A very helpful guide to discerning true conversion in your children and helping them to examine themselves

Ultimately, parents who seek to be faithful rather than successful can find rest in trusting in God’s promises daily as they take up the parenting mantle afresh.