

Discipleship Class on Parenting - 18 Years and Up
March 19th, 2023

1. Introduction:

- a. It is humbling to speak to you this morning. Our church is full of wonderful Christian parents and so it's an honor to teach.
 - b. By way of introduction, Connie and I have four married children and 19 grandchildren and one great grandson!
 - c. When you prepare a teaching on parenting, it's challenging because you are confronted with many things you wished you had done better. Connie and I are very grateful to God and to our children that they allowed us to walk with them during their teenage years and in their post-high school years. We were blessed in that they all went to college on Hillsborough Street in Raleigh! We had our bumps and scrapes along the way but by God's grace all of us enjoyed those years.
 - d. I would encourage you this morning to do something you're probably aware of: cherish the days you have; cherish them and use them for good. Most of you still have your children in your home and you have opportunity to both enjoy them and influence them for the kingdom in a way that you won't in future years. So enjoy these days, for they are precious.
 - e. Paul Tripp wrote a book called Age of Opportunity. It's about the teen years and how they are full of opportunities for your teen to grow (as well as yourself for as John mentioned the first week parenting involves a lot of sanctification in our lives). I also think that the age group of young people from age 18 to 25 (and beyond) is an age of opportunity.
 - f. Connie and I led the college ministry in our church in Lancaster. It was basically a home group that reached out to and included the students at the local college who were attending our church. That church is actually a Trinity Fellowship Church. And when I was up there a year or so ago I went out one evening with two of the guys who still live in that area and are actually still in the church.
 - g. This age group is a prime time for God to be at work in the lives of young people in continuing to form them into the image of Christ and to help strengthen them as his disciples. .
2. And I think that's how you look at this time of life (primarily) - a time to strengthen them in the faith and in their character and wisdom. And if they are not yet believers it's a time to help them by common grace to grow as mature adults.
3. Parenting is to be done in and by the grace of God (Parenting by faith; parenting by grace). Connie and I are very aware of God's grace in our family's life and in our parenting.

- a. There are a number of means of grace for us as parents. We want to take advantage of as many of them as possible. Though I have been tasked with speaking on age 18 and up, these graces all have application to parenting younger children.
4. Before we get started what are some of the things you'd like me to cover this morning? Feel free to ask questions along the way.
5. Prayer:
6. The grace of your example:
 - a. I'm not speaking about being the perfect parent. There are no perfect parents. I find comfort in James 3:2 - We all stumble in many ways. (when you think about parenting you're very aware of that)
 - b. Daniel alluded to this last week: Being a godly example is not about being a certain personality (trying to be someone you're not) or having certain gifts or abilities.
 - c. But is about this: that whatever you want your kids to grow in, then seek to grow in it and model it. Even if you're weak in that area that's okay but seek to grow in it. Modeling or being an example includes being able to talk about those areas where you haven't done well and are hoping to grow in.
 - d. One of the great motivators of parenting especially as your children get older: running to stay ahead of your children. Converted at 19, married at 22, a parent at 23. I was growing up as an adult and a Christian as I was beginning to parent.
 - e. The healthy Christian life is always upward; it's always an active pursuit of God and of growing in the knowledge of Christ and of his word. So being a growing Christian is a great example for your children and will help you in parenting them through all seasons of their lives.
 - f. An example of being an example is found in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. He intermixes his love and affection for them with his and Silas' example of holy living and (coupled) also their exhortation and encouragement.
 - i. 1:5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord,
 - ii. C2:10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 11 For you know how, like a father with his children, (he's talking to adults) 12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. (Here you see the role of the parent in the young adult's life-being examples, loving relationship, exhorting/encouraging)

- iii. 2:19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy.
- iv. 3:8 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.
- v. This is what life is about. It's about seeing others grow and stand fast in the Lord and that includes our children/grandchildren. Seeing them grow in Christ. And our example is a great contributor to that.
- g. This attitude of our children being our hope or joy our crown should motivate us to live to God for them. Our primary motivation should be to live for God's glory. But a second is that we live for the benefit and example of our children and grandchildren. This helps give us a motivation to say no to the flesh and yes to the Lord.
- h. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us that Christ died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. We are called to live for Jesus. And out of that commitment we are called to live for others.
 - i. Proverbs 17: 6 Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers. This is a stewardship we have from God = to live in such a way that our children are proud of us. We can be tempted to want our children to succeed so we can be proud of them
 - ii. NIV Parents are the pride of their children.
 - iii. Prov 20: 7 The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him!
 - iv. We should live for them not so much that they think well of us but so that they are inspired to love God and live for his glory. 3 John 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.
 - v. I'm not talking about being a superstar Christian but one who faithfully loves God and loves his family and loves his church, loves the gospel,
 - vi. You might say "Well Mike, I've really messed up", I haven't been a great example.
 - vii. That's an opportunity to be an example of humility and ask forgiveness. Dr. Dobson eg. (friends for life)
 - viii. In some ways we are all in that situation. There are areas we haven't grown in or are weak in. Do we talk about them and how we want to grow or things that have helped us turn it around.
 - ix. John mentioned the first week that the heart of parenting is love and humility. I heartily agree. When we model those two attributes they strengthen the tie that binds. See you can't control your children or make them love you or God but you can contribute to what strengthens the tie that binds together.
 - x. That phrase comes from a Christian hymn: It begins, "'Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds"

Sew love and grace and humility into your relationships and they will strengthen the ties that bind our hearts together with others including our young people.

- xi. It's hard for a person including our young adult to stiff arm a person of love and humility even a non-Christian.
- xii. Train up a child with all tenderness, affection and patience... Love should be the silver thread that runs through all your conduct. Kindness, gentleness, longsuffering, forbearance, patience, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a readiness to take part in childish joys - these are the cords by which a child must be led most easily - these are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart. J.C. Ryle
- xiii. One encouragement (in this area of being an example) is to pray Psalm 139- Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! Show me the areas I need to change in.
- xiv. If Time: Psalm 69: Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. Pray that God would make very evident to you the areas you need to change in and grow in.

7. The Grace of Sanctification: God wants to work in you and through you and they are connected: :

- a. How do we grow in godliness and being more like Christ - that's another way of saying how do we grow in sanctification). He gives us children to help us with that process! And even through our older children God gives us "opportunities" to grow.
- b. Did you ever have someone at work tell you, "I have an opportunity for you"! (a challenging or trying situation for you to handle)
- c. You will get plenty of "opportunities" to develop the fruit of the spirit as your children get older:
 - i. Don't miss those opportunities! When you get the phone call (Hey Dad-You'll never guess what happened or I need your help)see it as an opportunity. It's Jesus calling. It's an opportunity to show mercy and kindness and love and wisdom.
 - ii. Kill your young adults with love and kindness. 2 Corinthians 6: but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; 7 by truthful speech, and the power of God;
 - iii. So here is hopefully another practical recommendation for parenting all children: cultivate the fruit of the spirit! A great equipper for parenting and for life in general. It will truly guide you because it's not just what

you do in parenting but how you do it. And you want to do it with love and joy and peace and patience and self-control - all the fruit of the Spirit.

- iv. This involves looking at all those attributes in Galatians 5 and making a deliberate effort to think and pray on them regarding what they look like and how you can cultivate them.
- v. As they become young adults one of the blessings is that they begin to act like adults! But one of the challenges is that they are confronted with adult issues like relationships at a deeper level or with God's discipline in their lives or their adult struggles with sin.
- vi. These can be messy. There no longer the cute 4 year old. But messiness is part of life. Proverbs 14:4 Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.
- vii. Learn to lean into their messiness and help them even when the messiness gets on your nice shirt. It will be an "opportunity" for you to grow and for you to minister and serve them.

8. The grace of relationships:

- a. There's a transition that goes on between 12 and 18. As they get older your authority (in some ways) is decreasing. And when they hit 18 they are young adults (they may not always act that way!). And though that transition is not completely finished, it's getting pretty close. In some ways it is complete and some ways it isn't.
- b. Obviously it depends on your child. If they get married at 19 then yes it's a wrap! If they are in college and continuing to live in your home, yes there's still some vestige of authority but the pendulum has swung pretty far and now it's primarily pastoral, primarily relational.
- c. I've often thought that especially as your children get older that the only two things you can lean on is their relationship with God and your relationship with them.
- d. Even if your young adult is not yet a Christian if your relationship with them is good you can still have their ear and influence them and help them grow as young adults.
- e. 2:7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. A good description of parenting.
- f. Parenting including parenting young adults requires that you're all in! Paul was all in regarding his relationship with the Thessalonians.
 - i. Don't be distant or unemotional or unaffectionate.

- ii. When people ask you what you do, say “I am the parent of a teenager. It is the most important job I have ever had. Everything else I do for a living is secondary.” Then say “You know I have never had a job that is so exciting. I have never had a job that is so full of opportunities. Everyday I do things that are important, worthwhile and lasting. I wouldn’t give up this job for anything” Paul Tripp
- g. These years are definitely times of continuing to “lean in” to their lives. This time of life provides some of the greatest opportunities for your young person to grow in the Lord and to grow as a person. Look for creative ways to be part of that.
- h. Here are some thoughts on the grace of your relationship with your young adult:
 - i. You must pursue them.
 - ii. This sometimes can be challenging. They’re busy or they may not want to (they’d rather be with their friends). They may not want to engage in conversation. You have to work at being creative. And being persistent. Sometimes you have to earn it. (By being humble, loving, patient, persistent, genuine, by listening and enjoying them. By being the adult. And by praying)
 - iii. Remember love and the fruit of the Spirit - you can’t control their response/behavior but you can yours. Seek to be as much as possible their best (biblical) friend, their advocate, their faithful friend. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.
 - iv. Cultivate the attitude “I’m going to be here for you” “I’m for you and I’m also going to speak the truth to you” = grace and truth. (because sometimes you have to say painful things to them-honest things in love; if you don’t say it prob no one will)
 - v. Take confidence that of all the people in the world these are your children and God has called you to reach them and minister to them in ways that are special.
 - vi. Remember, adversity as painful as it can be, can also provide wonderful opportunities to walk with your children. (Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep). Maybe they didn’t get into the school they wanted to; maybe they feel lonely and without friends, maybe dating hasn’t worked out for them. Be there for them.
 - vii. Remember we all have strengths and weaknesses. Teens and young people take a while to grow up and grow out of their sins and their immaturity. Life, including life as a Christian takes time to figure out.
 - 1. Think of something you can do really well right now with a lot of skill and how when you first started doing it was really hard.

2. Connie: Remember Their story isn't done- Until we die our story is being written but especially at this age. So don't judge them at 13 or 18 or even 22.
- i. Grace of Discipleship:
 - i. This is an extension of the grace of relationship.
 - ii. At this point in their lives, their schedules may be really full and hopefully part of that is they're part of the young adult group or a college ministry or some type of Bible study.
 - iii. But look for opportunities to continue to shepherd their hearts and disciple them. Remember you will always be their parents. Friends may come and go. Or they may develop significant relationships with others individually or after they're married as couples. They will be in their small groups and relationships there. But you will always be their parents and so parenting never stops in one sense. It's different but you never stop being their parents.
 - iv. Look for opportunities to share the spiritual disciplines. EGS
 - v. For a while years ago the four boys and I prayed together once a month at 630 in the morning.
 - vi. They are becoming mature adults (hopefully). Talk to them about adult stuff. Initiate conversations. And if they are not always super receptive then remember the "drip" method. (Hopefully we can have longer enjoyable conversations)
 - vii. Their understandings are like narrow-necked vessels: we must pour in the wine of knowledge gradually or much of it will be spilled and lost. "Line upon line and precept upon precept here a little and there a little" must be our rule....Truly there is need of patience in training a child but without it nothing can be done." J.C. Ryle
 - viii. Also under this heading I will put the grace of the gospel. It's a category or teaching all to itself. Tim Challies: Don't put your hope in a system of parenting. Put your hope in the gospel and consistently teach it to your children and model it.
 - ix. At this age they can have a deeper grasp and understanding and love for the gospel. Help them understand its centrality in their lives - both in walking and applying the freedom of justification by faith alone and in the power of the gospel and its power over sin.
 - j. Grace of Your Home and Hospitality:
 - i. I Peter 4 tells us to show hospitality to one another. Some translations read "practice" hospitality.
 - ii. This is one of the disciplines of grace, Practice it. It may not be your spiritual gift but practice it - with Christians and non-Christians. Don't worry about having to impress people or being fancy. Jones eg.

- iii. While the kids were growing up we had hospitality with international students which we loved and which were also good for our kids - to meet people from different countries and cultures
- iv. Practice hospitality with your young adults and their friends.
- v. We had wonderful times with our kids and their friends. They were mostly Christians or at least had grown up in a Christian homes but sometimes not.
- vi. Let your home be a place where they and their friends can come and put their feet up.
- vii. Become their friends friends.
- k. The Grace of Prayer:
 - i. Talk to almost any parent of grown or older children and they will tell you that prayer is one of their important callings.
 - ii. This should be true at every stage of our parenting. We have the privilege and calling to pray for our children and grandchildren. When they are no longer in our homes or under our authority this calling increases.
 - iii. For me it is one of my core disciplines. It is a weighty responsibility.
 - iv. Pray for your children. Beseech God for your children. This is your heritage - the children God has given you. Pray for their salvation. Pray for their sanctification. Pray for their safety.
 - v. Pray scriptural prayers. I have a list of biblical prayers that I regularly pray for my children and their families.
 - vi. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, Colossians 1:9-12
 - vii. Pray personal prayers: Make him a person of humility. Help him to learn to trust you.
 - viii. Develop a life of prayer. Paul Miller: A Praying Life. Pray regularly along the way. Safety/going to the pool/playground.
 - ix. Prayer and fasting.
 - x. Parenting by faith; pray in faith. Pray the promises.