

Intro. On more than one occasion, Jesus expressed his respect for and understanding of children. He taught that unless a person will adopt the humility and lack of self regard that children in some cultures demonstrate, then they cannot become a member of the kingdom of God. Jesus was an advocate for children because God the Father is excited about them as well.

God's grand and glorious purpose of rescuing a people for his name from every tongue, tribe and nation begins with every person beginning as a child. People are supposed to be introduced to God as a loving, powerful, holy God as a child. That's God's plan. That's the primary reason for inventing parents! Teach children about God.

Children need gospel driven advocates and truth embracing defenders today more than ever before. Consider the world we live in and the culture of values often embraced regarding children.

Child abuse. There is a report of child abuse made every 10 seconds in our country. Almost 5 children die every day, most of these under the age of 4. Forms of child abuse are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Abusing and neglecting children is at its core a rejection and rebellion against God and his design for children. The restorative powers of grace through the gospel of Christ is the only remedy for the resulting lack of trust, feelings of worthlessness and sense of being damaged goods that are caused by abuse.

Of all forms of child abuse, neglect is the most pervasive. Ignoring the needs of the child, allowing a child to be in unsupervised, dangerous settings and making a child feel worthless or stupid commonly occur in our community. There is another reason for truthful child advocacy.

Abortion. The number of unborn children killed through abortion has declined in the past decade in America but the statistics reveal an average over the last 20 years of around a million children a year being put to death by choice. The numbers are absolutely staggering worldwide as over 42 million children are aborted each year. The sanctity or value of life is directly connected to the one true God, the maker of heaven and earth, who gives life. We live in a culture that embraces and defends the right to kill children. Only the soul healing and forgiving power of grace extended by our loving God through Christ could ever cleanse, renew and restore the damage done by all this killing. It is a world in rebellion against the giver of life itself. There is yet another reason that children need intelligent and biblical defenders.

Child worship. A phenomenon that is just as real as both abuse and abortion is the ditch on the other side of the road where children are placed at the center of the family or culture and made the primary issue rather than God and his glory. Parents don't blatantly deny the gospel but in practice the children's participation in sports, education and other things take such priority that involvement in family or church worship is made secondary.

One of our own vulgar humorists recognizes child worship with the following comments in a routine he did entitled 'It's bad for ya.' This astute observer of human behavior defines one form of child abuse as an 'excessive devotion to children by professional parents.'

"Isn't the pressure to succeed placed on kids for the sake of the parents just a sophisticated form of child abuse?" He goes on to say that the so-called "self-esteem movement" has been a complete failure because children never get beyond the artificially indoctrinated notion that they're "special," when in fact, children are "incomplete works." "A lot of kids never get to hear the truth about themselves until they're in their twenties when their boss fires them or until their partners leave them because they don't want to be the all-praising parents for a grown-up person.

1. Gospel driven families and churches embrace the God given value of children.

them and gave himself for them. While children can be fun, satisfying, enjoyable and fulfilling, they are much more than that. Our families and church focus should reflect the dignity, courage and commitment that are required by the very value assigned to children by God.

Another way the gospel impacts our thinking regarding children . . .

2. Gospel driven children submit to parents as to God.

Eph.6:1-3

We must acknowledge that this text is addressed to children for the renewal and change of their thinking. This assumes that children can submit to the gospel, be a part of a congregation and be expected to live a life of love and submission. These instructions to children assume that children face enormous pressures from within and without to replace God and his ways with ways of their own or the world. Children are able to be filled by the Spirit with the truth of the trustworthiness of God and the supreme authority of Christ.

Children/teens, for you to reflect the love of God and the power of the Gospel, you must practice submission to your parents in the ways listed in these verses.

Parents, for you to obey God and magnify the transforming power of the gospel in Christ, you must parent in such a devoted way that trains, helps, corrects and models for your children these commands. These commands for children, when followed, provide a sphere of protection and blessing as well as a pathway to know and serve God.

Submission to parents with God's help is seen in these four responses from children/teens:

- Obedience. 6:1 *Children, obey your parents*

Cmp. Col. 3:20-21 listen, attend to

A child/teens obedience to parents is a part of your discipleship/submission to Christ. *'in the Lord'* – in keeping with your commitment to Christ.

Disobedience viewed strongly – Rom.1:30; 2Tim.3:2

Obedience to God given authority is the path of freedom. Psa. 119:44-45

Obedience does not come easily or naturally to you.

Obedience is doing what you are told without challenge, excuse or delay. Tripp

Obedience to parents connected to obedience to God – listen and do. 1Sam 15:22

- Honor. 6:2 *Honor your father and mother*

Honor means to respect, highly prize and value your parents.

Honor and fear used of both parents and God. Prov.3:9; Deut.6:13; Ex.20:12; Lev.19:3

Rebellion/cursing God brings death Lev.24:16 – Rebellion/cursing parents brings death.
20:9; Deut. 21:18-21

Proverbs/wisdom presents honoring in practical ways – Prov. 2:1-5; 4:1-9

Cmp. Fear or honor of Christ in 5:21.

- Trust. 6:2-3 *commandment with a promise*

A clear motive for children obeying/submitting to parental authority is the promise of God attached to the command.

Obedient and submissive sons and daughters are assured by God that he will bless them.

This is a proverbial expression such as is found in Psalm 91:16 or 1Tim.4:8

God's promises are true and he is trustworthy – primary lesson for children/teens to learn.

Cmp. Teaching of Eph.1:3 ff . . . blessed by God, loved by God . . . promise making, promise keeping god.

Why do church kids grow up and leave church? They choose to not trust God. They choose to trust themselves and their wisdom/ability to control their lives. Prov.3:1-8

- Learn. 6:4 *discipline and instruction of the Lord*

While everyone at any age should be a learner, it is essential for gospel driven children and teens to enjoy learning.

Prov. 22:15 teaches that it will take more than words and 'time-outs' to dislodge the resistance to instruction that is imbedded in the child's heart.

Prov. 29:15 teaches how important it is that a child understand his or her own heart and needs.

Prov. 15:32-33 teaches the child/teen that ignoring instruction from God given authorities is equal to self hatred. Humility comes before honor.

Learning comes in various forms from listening well to physical pain to the discipline of consequences.

Obedience, honor, trust and learn. Children/teens quickly recognize in these commands the severe battle within them to not submit to parents or God. It almost seems sometimes like the forces within you are irresistible and overpowering to live independent of authority. The only hope for submission to parents and God is through the transforming power of the gospel.

Parents quickly recognize the super human effort that is required to teach, train, correct and discipline children/teens to submit in these ways. Only the grace of God freely given and received can empower parents to respect God and their children in these ways.

Take Aways

1. Children, run to Christ. You may have parents praying for you and pointing you to Christ or you may not. Acknowledge and admit the foolishness of your heart, your need of cleansing and your need of God's help in Christ. Commit your life to your faithful heavenly Father.

2. Children, build your heart for God and the gospel. Stop listening to all the voices that support your independent and selfish perspectives. Stop making excuses for your cold heart toward God. Ask your parents or church leaders for help and forgiveness so that you can live a joyfully submissive life for the glory of God.

3. Children and parents, accept your God-given assignment. Determine to bring glory to God through your submissive lifestyle to his love and authority. Look for ways to obey, honor, trust and learn together as followers of Christ. Parents, repent and seek God for grace to change your behavior that devalues your children as people God has assigned you to disciple for his joy.