

**Intro.** Read Eph. 6:1-4. This morning we want to wrap up our 4 week series on parenting that preaches the good news by looking at the last 3 words of verse 4. As with the instructions given to children, a guiding and motivating principle is given to fathers/parents as well.

Children are to obey parents because it is the right thing to do. It aligns them with God and the promises of his blessing on their lives. Children are guided and motivated to behavior change by the simple principle that doing right connects them to the promises of God. A child's obedience to their parents pleases God. It is a really good thing to please God. Fathers are to lead and teach based on principles as well.

Fathers are to nurture their children through instruction and discipline that is described by the phrase 'of the Lord.' This phrase helps define the guiding principles for a father to shape his thinking and behavior as a dad. The phrase is a common expression that usually receives little attention as it appears as a tag along at the end of a sentence filled with important words. The phrase is like a leash or restraining device that continually pulls the father back to God's ways. That is what guiding principles do and that is why dads should have them and use them.

'Of the Lord' points the father toward the source for his guiding parenting principles. It points him toward the Lord as both the subject of his teaching and discipline as well as the reference point of his nurturing. The father provides the kind of instruction the Lord himself provides. The father provides teaching from his own life which is shaped by allegiance to the Lord. The fathers guiding principle is to expose his children to the Lord in such a way that they will know the Lord and love him.

This qualifying phrase 'of the Lord' points us to the gospel described in Ephesians 1-5. Abraham and Drew helped us understand the teaching to fathers and mothers in verse 4 over the last two Sundays. Both repeatedly emphasized the relationship between the gospel and parenting well. As a matter of fact, the larger context of the book of Ephesians is that the gospel defines, drives and produces distinctive and Christ like behavior in our marriages and families. That is why we have repeated used the phrased 'gospel driven parenting.'

A quote from a Swiss educator used in Steve Wright's book 'reThink' summarizes our point well . . .

*The best way for a child to learn about God is to know a real Christian. The best way for them to discover the power of prayer is to live with parents who pray and truly walk with God.*

This morning we want to spend our time teaching how the gospel is linked to your marriage and parenting. Husbands, wives, children, Moms and Dads who are saved by God have the resources available by God's grace to behave in relationships in a way that preaches/models the good news of God's love in Christ. So the question we want to answer is this . . . what does it mean to be a gospel driven father? What does it mean to have a gospel focused marriage? A gospel focus means that the defining truths of the gospel are evident in the way you live your life in relationships. The gospel is the source that provides the principles by which you live and parent.

'Out of reverence for Christ' 5:21; Wives, 'as to the lord' 5:22; husbands, 'as Christ loved the church' 5:25; children 'for this pleases the Lord' Col. 3:20; parents, 'of the Lord' E 6:4; all of these are reminders that we are not free to define or select our guiding principles on our own. What makes sense, what works easiest, what is most convenient, what is acceptable, how we were raised . . . all must yield to the influence of the gospel as it saves and shapes us for God's kingdom.

Let's look together at four guiding principles to parent, live and father by that are consistent with the gospel.

Parenting that preaches the good news is driven and resourced by these gospel principles:

**1. You love actively because you are loved.** E 1:4; 2:4-5; 3:16-19; 4:15; 5:1-2

A dominant theme of Ephesians and the gospel is the love of God demonstrated in Christ for you. Scripture links both a mother's love and a father's love as communicating aspects of God's love for people. Note the repeated emphasis and the various nuances of God's great love as taught in Ephesians.

Allow me to draw your attention to two particular components of love that is crucial for Father's to understand and build into their parenting behavior. Both of these aspects of love are overwhelmingly obvious in God's love for us.

- Willing sacrifice. Eph. 5:1-2

Twice in Ephesians, gospel love is said to be expressed in giving yourself up for others in a way that is modeled by Christ and is able to be copied. Cf 5:25

Gal. 2:20 1John 3:16

Gospel focused dads are quick and ready to forfeit and surrender their lives for the good of their children. In today's world, for most dads, the most costly sacrifices include the giving of time and truth.

Cmp fragrance of 5:1-2 w/ 2Cor. 2:14-16

- Expressed affection. Eph. 1:4ff

Note the affection terms of 1:5 adoption and 1:8 lavished.

Dad's need to lead the way in the home by setting the standards of affection high:

Focused attention. Eye contact. Physical touch.

**2. You dispense grace because you are dependent on grace.** 2:1-10; 4:29

Grace is kindness expressed to the undeserving. Grace is the core component of the good news that God rescues sinful people. Only by receiving undeserved kindness can you be right with God.

Grace is a missing ingredient in most parenting. Can you think of a setting or application that cries out for grace more than parenting or marriage? Dad's teach and model grace at least in two ways:

- Dependence – a life style of dependent prayer and gratitude for daily grace from God.
- Encouragement – verbal recognition of others and the evidences of grace in everyday life.

E. 4:29

Prov. 10:11

evidences of grace/demanding



## **Take Aways**

1. Men, run to Christ. One reason you may not be able to communicate the gospel to your children and wife is because you are not born again yourself.
2. Men, ask for help. We are planning initiatives as a church family in the next few months that will provide help, training, coaching and encouragement to men who feel a bit overwhelmed.
3. Men, talk to your wives and children about what God is doing in your life and seek their forgiveness, support and prayers.