

Foundations for Parenting

Parenting 6-10, Part 1 Shepherding Goals

INTRODUCTION

Our Goal:

“We all know that God’s goal for our parenting is that we work ourselves out of a job. His plan is that we would be his instruments in producing children who are biblically mature, ready to face life in the fallen world, ready to be salt and light, ready to be contributors to his kingdom work, no longer needing the day-by-day guidance that we have given them for so many years.” - Paul David Tripp

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” - Genesis 2:24

Our Children:

Transitional Period (Ages 6-10)

- Growing awareness of the world
- Growing awareness of other people
- Growing awareness of God (if taught)
- Expanding circle of influences
- Growth in “independent thinking”
- Critical period in shaping of their world-view
- Childhood to young adult (adolescence)

Us:

We are to shepherd our children as stewards of God’s gifts.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” - Ephesians 6: 1-4

“Recognizing that God has called you to function as His agent defines your task as a parent. Our culture has reduced parenting to providing care. Parents often see the task in these narrow terms. The child must have food, clothes, a bed and some quality time. In sharp contrast to such a weak view, God has called you to a more profound task than being a care-provider. You shepherd your child in God’s behalf. The task God has given you is not one that can be conveniently scheduled. It is a pervasive task. Training and shepherding is going on whenever you are with your children. Whether waking, talking or resting, you must be involved in helping your child to understand life, himself, and his needs from a biblical perspective (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).” - Tedd Tripp

Shepherding involves more than being a caregiver. It involves protecting, guiding, and feeding.

I. SHEPHERDING TOWARD CONVERSION

Pointing our children to the Savior involves:
- Understanding the condition of our children
- Preaching the gospel
- Understanding conversion

A. Understanding the Condition of Our Children

Children are born Sinners

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” - Romans 5:12

“Many of us have friends and relatives who profess to be Christians but in whose lives there appears to be no evidence of the discipline of grace. Oftentimes we cling to a frail hope that such persons are believers because they made a profession at some time, despite the lack of any evidence of the Spirit’s work in their lives. It seems parents are especially prone to this form of denial regarding children who show no evidence of a genuine work of grace.” - Jerry Bridges

B. Preaching the Gospel

“I know that you cannot convert your child. I know well that they who are born again are born, not of the will of man, but of God. But I also know that God says expressly, ‘Train up a child in the way in which he should go,’ and that he never laid a command on man which he would not give man grace to perform. And I know, too, that our duty is not to stand still and dispute, but to go forward and obey. It is just in this going forward that God will meet us. The path of obedience is the way in which

he gives the blessing. We have only to do as the servants were commanded at the marriage feast in Canaan, to fill the water-pots with water and we may safely leave it to the Lord to turn that water into wine.” - J.C. Ryle

Our call as ambassadors for Christ begins in our homes.

C. Understanding Conversion

1. Consistently sharing the gospel

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” - Romans 1:16

“The gospel has an irreducible core of truth that can’t be changed or eliminated. Jesus, who is God, humbled Himself, took on the nature of man, and led a sinless life. He was crucified on the cross unjustly by the hands of men and there received the wrath of God upon Himself for the sins of all who would believe. Jesus acted as our substitute, taking our punishment. Jesus is our Savior who, after taking the full fury of God for our sin, uttered the most wonderful words, ‘It is finished.’ Then, on the third day, Jesus rose again showing us His victory over death and sin. Jesus is Lord over all creation and we must submit our lives to his rule.” - Marty Machowski

We must shepherd our children toward an awareness of their need for a savior. (They are sinning because they are a sinner in need of a Savior.)

We must help them to see there is no other way to be free from the grip of sin, and the wrath of God than by responding to the gospel in repentance and faith.

We must help them to understand the cross through constantly keeping this before them.

2. Explaining repentance and faith, and how do they work together

What are repentance and faith?

“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.” - Acts 20:20-21

Repentance involves sorrow for sin, changing one’s mind about sin and turning from sin. Sorrow for sin, and a desire to flee it.

Faith is trusting in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus alone for salvation from sin. True biblical faith includes understanding, approving and a wholehearted trust. (Getting into the wheelbarrow).

Conversion is a single action of turning from sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith.

“When we invite children to respond to the gospel we need to challenge them to repent and believe. As we evaluate their response we should look for both faith and repentance. This can take time and give us pause before we quickly interpret their response to the call of the gospel as genuine conversion.” - Marty Machowski

When and how do we talk to our children about repentance and faith?

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.” - 1 Cor. 13:11

“Children’s talking, thinking and reasoning are, by definition, immature. They are often inconsistent. Their thinking can be arbitrary, simple and naïve. These qualities of children and youth are not in themselves wrong—they are the result of the fact that human beings do not spring from the womb fully formed in body or mind. Even Jesus had to grow in wisdom and stature.” - Robin Boisvert

Conversion happens at a variety of ages:

- Look for an awareness of sin and dislike for sin
- Look for an awareness of God
- Ask God for wisdom
- Look for fruit

Don’t be surprised if you have to help them apply the gospel as a saved sinner

3. Examining evidences of genuine faith and repentance

What is evidence of genuine faith and repentance?

“Conversion always results in a changed life. All Christians bear the fruit which comes from repentance. Jesus said, ‘You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.’ (John 15:16) Scripture is clear; conversion always results in a changed life. If there is no observable fruit in a child’s life, it is best to assume there has been no conversion.” - Marty Machowski

A love for God and his ways (understand who God is, able to articulate the gospel, have a growing relationship with God, willing and able to pray for God’s help)

A love of others

A fear of God (a humility that brings a suspicion of the heart, an initiation of confession)

“Our change, or sanctification, is gradual and may be small at first. The Scripture uses the analogy of fruit on a tree. At first only the flower is observable. But in a few weeks the tiny fruit begins to form. Trees that only flowered but did not produce fruit can be distinguished from those on which fruit are present. Children are quick to speak an allegiance to Christ (like the flower) but it is only when God regenerates their hearts that they bear lasting fruit.” - Marty Machowski

II. SHEPHERDING TOWARD CONVICTION

Shepherding our children’s hearts involves:

- *Understanding the heart*
- *Engaging the heart*
- *Applying the gospel*

A. Understanding the Heart

What is the heart?

“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” - Luke 6:43-45

Behavior is rooted in the heart

Often times we want to blame our responses on our circumstances or another person, and our children often do the same.

What our children say and do flows from the heart.

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” - Proverbs 4:23

“If my heart is the source of my sin problem, then lasting change must always travel through the pathway of my heart. It is not enough to alter my behavior or to change my circumstances. Christ transforms people by radically changing their hearts. If the heart doesn’t change, the person’s words and behavior may change temporarily because of an external pressure or incentive. But when the pressure or incentive is removed, the changes will disappear.” - Paul David Tripp

Shaping influences play a part

“Shaping influences are those events and circumstances in a child’s developmental years that prove to be catalysts for making him the person he is. But the shaping is not automatic; the ways he responds to these events and circumstances determine the effect they have upon him.” - Tedd Tripp

- Structure of family life
- Family values
- Family roles
- Family conflict resolution
- Friends (including media and music)
- Education
- Church
- Other life experience

B. Engaging the Heart

Correction should always engage with the heart

“All behavior is linked to some attitude of heart. Therefore, discipline must address attitudes of heart. This understanding does marvelous things for discipline. It makes the heart the issue, not just the behavior. It focuses correction on deeper things than changed behavior. The point of confrontation is what is occurring in the heart. Your concern is to unmask your child’s sin, helping him to understand how it reflects a heart that has strayed. That leads to the Cross of Christ. It underscores the need for a Savior. It provides opportunities to show the glories of God who sent His Son to change hearts and free people enslaved by sin.” - Tedd Tripp

Avoid focusing on outward change to impress others or ourselves

C. Applying the Gospel

Every opportunity for shepherding is a gospel opportunity. The gospel addresses the heart.

“Our objective when we teach our children is not simply to ensure...that our children are not criminals, or that they “do well”. Rather, our desire is that they should love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul and mind. Therefore, formative instruction must be rooted in Scripture, not in what Dr. Phil and Dr. Laura advise, or what Parents magazine recommends or even what the pediatrician tells us to do.” - Tedd Tripp

Help them to apply the gospel

The gospel helps your children in cultivating conviction

- Your sin is against God, so confess your sin to God.
- Ask Him to help you to see your sin clearly and to help you feel godly sorrow.
- Express faith in Jesus' death on the cross for your sin, and receive His forgiveness and mercy.
- Thank God for His forgiveness, help and love.
- Ask God by His Spirit, to help you change, to see and employ "the way of escape" the next time you are tempted.

Watch for evidences of the gospel's saving work

- Growing suspicion of self
- More concerned about being godly than appearing godly
- Praying for and pursuing godliness
- Growing in godliness
- Confessing sin you are unaware of
- Affection and respect toward you

** This material was adapted from a parenting course written by Kenneth Maresco, a pastor at Covenant Life Church of Gaithersburg, Maryland (www.covlife.org).*