



Monday 06-22-20

SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD'S WAY

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

TITLE: Parenting to the Fullest Pt. 1

Parenting is an interesting animal. You get the word you're going to have a kid. It brings up so many thoughts and emotions. How do you do this parenting thing? Will it be natural? Am I going to break this tiny thing? How do I not mess this up? You begin to think through the parenting you received and begin to identify what you will do and what you won't do. And then the day arrives and it's game on.

Now to be completely honest, I've never been a baby person. I'm not naturally going to come up and hold a baby. Sorry to disappoint you, but I'm not a baby guy.

In fact, I made the mistake a couple years ago when my new nephew came to town. He was cute. He had a wicked good baby smile, so I thought, "I'll give it a shot and hold him." Sure enough, the kid projectile vomits all over my shirt and pants. I won't make that mistake again.

Tiffany on the other hand loves babies. Her heart melted over every coo, every funny face, and even the tiny little toots our kids made. And I think that's the way it should be.

For me, my excitement in being a dad comes when the kids are about a year and a half or so. They begin to show their personalities and they can do more than eat, poop, and roll over.

And isn't it amazing how different each child is? Each one of our boys is wholly unique from the next. Each challenge they face is unique. This makes parenting very challenging. I mean you can read every James Dobson book, every article from Family Life, and every parenting passage in the Bible, and you think you've got it. But then the ear infections happen. The football gets thrown into the living room TV. The kid knocks the other kid's tooth out. Defiance shows up. The competing personalities show up. It's easy reading about parenting. It's a lot harder doing it.

Here's the truth: God doesn't lay out 10 steps to being a better parent, or 7 tricks to getting a new child by Monday. But what He does provide in His word is solid counsel with a lot of application. In fact, in His Word, God does tell us how to be godly children and godly parents, and that's what we want to talk about this week.

Well, we're going to begin by listening to the Apostle Paul. In Colossians 3, Paul is talking about our new identities in Christ. Part of this new identity is manifested in our relationships. That's why Paul addresses husbands, wives, children, fathers, and bondservants.

Paul knows the family matters to God. He rightly recognizes that the family often goes beyond just husbands and wives, so in Colossians 3:20-21, he moves from the marriage relationship to children and parents.

Before we move into Colossians 3:20-21, where Paul addresses children and fathers, I want to look briefly at the first few verses. Because many people forget or were never told about the true difference that Christ makes.

Paul begins in Colossians 3, verses 1-2 by saying, “[If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.](#)¹”

Paul says, *if you have been raised in Christ*. It should be translated “since.” It’s not in question. He’s writing to believers. So, *since you’ve been raised in Christ*, your focus should be continually on Heaven and the qualities of Christ, which are to be manifested in every believer today. Paul restates it in verse 2. He says, think about Heaven, and stop thinking about this world. That’s why in verses 5-17, he actually contrasts the two. He says in verse 5, “[put to death what is earthly in you.](#)”

Now think about those words. He says, “put to death.” He doesn’t say, put them aside. He doesn’t say lock them up. He doesn’t say, put on a show. He says, *put to death*. Kill. Destroy. Get rid of the old self – the worldly side of you. If it’s not godly, kill it. As heavenly citizens, we are ending our past, sinful lifestyles. Paul would list things such as evil desires, idolatry, sexual immorality. He then says to put aside. In other words, take off; like taking off dirty clothes, but it’s more like throwing away.

Here in Lincoln, it’s been raining a lot! It has been raining here quite a bit. Our kids love playing in the rain... and mud. Well, they went out after it had rained 5 inches, and they destroyed their old clothes. What were the orders we gave them? Take those off and throw those clothes away. Don’t try to save them. They’re no longer suitable. Throw them away.

Paul says, take these old earthly, sinful qualities, such as anger, slander, obscene talk, lying, and others, and throw them away. They are garbage.

Okay, we got it Paul. The old is sinful, so throw it away. It’s dead. But are we supposed to be naked?

No, in verse 10, Paul says, “[and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.](#)²” So because of our new identity in Christ, we put aside the old, dead self – like old destroyed clothes - and we put on our new selves, which, Paul says, is being renewed in knowledge. I like how the NASB puts it, “being renewed to a true knowledge.” That’s key. As believers, we are to daily be renewing our mind. That’s what Paul writes in Romans 12:2.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Col 3:1–2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Col 3:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

If we are going to be renewed in true knowledge, we have to desire, seek, and consume truth. The word here is epignosis. It's a deep, thorough knowledge. The source of knowledge for the Christian is the Bible. That's why Paul said to Timothy, "[All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,](#)¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Peter would say, *Christians are to desire the Word and with it they will grow.*

When we do this, it helps us live in those new clothes. Paul then lists out some of the characteristics of these new clothes. He says, when we're in Christ, we will demonstrate kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness and others. Then in verse 14 he says, "[And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.](#)³" When we love God, we will love each other. When we love each other, we will demonstrate these qualities.

DISCUSSION:

N: So let me ask my friends, Arnie Cole and Cara Whitney, give us a picture or an example of how love binds everything together within a family.

C: I'm going to let Arnie go first on this one.

A: Well, you know, it's so easy to talk about, and I think it's more prevalent today to talk about, how families get torn apart. But it's also wonderful when a family is drawn together for love for each other, to pitch in and carry the ball. In our family, we see that all the time, where somebody gets sick and everybody pitches in; we're kind of an old fashioned family. We live on a 40 acre horse ranch and our daughter lives real close by. And just anything that comes up, we're like one team always on the same page, moving forward.

C: I would say that it brings people together, because it makes differences compatible. So if you have an orchestra and each one's playing a separate instrument, but if you have the same conductor, then you can make music together. So that would be love that ties the differences together.

N: Yeah. And I think we see it best exemplified in our relationship with God, and He makes it possible for us to love each other in a way that really does create that beautiful music in a family.

A: And also not to be too ideal, but there comes a time when kids get like into that teenage years, when a lot of the love is focused on them, and may not be returned.

C: Only if you're doing your job well.

N: Yeah, you mean it won't be returned if you're doing your job well?

C: Probably not.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Col 3:14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

N: Yes. Yes. It's called discipline.

We're talking about parenting to the fullest today. So, let's pick it up in Colossians 3 verse 20.

“²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” At the time of Paul's writing, women and children were viewed as second class citizens. Generally speaking, children were viewed as property under the rule of the father. According to Dionysius, in his “Roman Antiquities”, he reports that fathers had the authority to imprison their kids. They could scourge and lock up their kids. They could make their kids work in the fields. Fathers could sell them into slavery. Fathers could even murder their own children. This was completely legal under Roman law. And this was true until the father died or the child was emancipated. So for Paul to address children here is counter-cultural, if not revolutionary.

Paul writes, “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” Immediately this brings up many questions for us today, such as, well, the parent / child relationship has evolved since Paul's writing. I mean, we're not waiting for our father's death to be free or to be legally emancipated. So does this mean I am to obey my parents when I'm 20? 30? 40? 50?

When we read “children”, we need to avoid restricting it to an age. Paul wouldn't have. It is better to think of it in the context of a child living in a home, and under parental rule or authority. So this surely applies to the 8 year old, the 12 year old, the 16 year old, or the 25 year old. It's pretty standard stuff: Live under their roof and there will likely be some expectations or rules. If this is true for you today, obey the rules of the home.

This command for children to obey parents is something we find as early as Exodus 20:12, in The Ten Commandments. Exodus says, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.” Children, you are to honor and respect your parents. What if they're weird? Yep. What if they're different? Yep. What if they're part of a different political party? Yep.

So, according to Proverbs 1:8, they are to listen to their parents' instruction and obey. Proverbs 1:8 says, “Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching.” As God honoring and parenting honoring creatures, we are to listen or hear what our parents say.

Tiffany and I have three boys who range in age from 7-12. And it's interesting watching our oldest begin to transition from child to young man. I see a very natural and good independence begin to develop. And like most pre-teens, they begin to think because they've watched YouTube, or read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, that they have all the answers. Well, so too our oldest when I speak to him, he can be quick to dismiss what I'm saying. In other words, he does not listen to my instruction. He does not take the time to hear what I'm saying. So, just like the Proverb said, children are to listen and not forsake their parents' instruction.

As an adult, I think this is still important. I still go to my parents for counsel. I seek advice. I ask for it. Why? Because they know a thing or two, because they've seen a thing or two. My mother

is honestly one of the smartest people I know. She's a walking trivia book. When I participate in trivia nights, I ask her to be on the team. She's got a lot of knowledge. But she's also a walking commentary on the Bible. She has been studying the Bible for years, so she's a great sounding board. She brings general insight, but also godly counsel. That's priceless. So I want to listen.

The same is true for my father. He was a pastor here in Lincoln years ago. He's been studying and writing in retirement. He has an understanding of the Bible in a way foreign to many. He helps Scripture come to life.

I come to my parents for counsel and insight. So I'm postured to hear, to honor, and as an adult, I do not have to "do" what they suggest because I'm not under their roof. I'm there as their son who seeks counsel.

But if you're at home and living under the roof of your parents, the command still stands, *obey your parents*. Look, even if you're 28 and back at home for a time. Obey your parents. Chances are, your parents aren't going to have the same expectations as when you were 8. If it is the same, negotiate for adjusted rules. And if they're unreasonable expectations, then you have the freedom to live somewhere else. There's nothing disrespectful about that.

Paul says, be obedient in everything. But do you really have to do everything they say? I mean, what if your parents are non-believers? What if they're immoral jerks? Remember, Paul is writing to Christian parents and homes. So there is an assumption that what they are asking for will be moral and approved by God. We can be sure of this because Paul ends the verse by "for this pleases the Lord." What pleases the Lord? Obedience. And God will never command His children (or anyone else) to sin.

Remember, Jesus' teaching in Luke 11:11-13. Jesus says, "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Parents are to love, care, and provide for their children, just like our Heavenly Father does. But we know in a fallen world, not all parents are godly, or even morally neutral. It's not uncommon to turn on the news and see a report of a child who's locked in a dog kennel. It's not uncommon to hear of a parent prostituting a daughter. In a fallen world, sinful people do horribly sinful things...even to precious children.

So, should children obey parents? Even dysfunctional and abusive parents? Well, yes...unless, of course, it goes against what God says. And if your parents are Christians, they likely won't tell you to do something that is sinful and against God. When we obey our parents, our bosses, or whoever we answer to, it pleases God. Because ultimately, we are accountable to God.

In fact, that's why Paul commands this obedience. Paul says, "for this pleases the Lord."⁴ When we obey our parents, it pleases God. In Matthew 3:17, God declared, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." God deserves the same honor with us as children.

And this notion of doing things for God is imperative, because in all we do, we are to do it for the glory of God. The reality is children don't get to pick their parents. They're born into a world of dysfunction and sin. However, just like citizens of Heaven, we are called to represent Christ in each country, each town, and each neighborhood we inhabit. This is a result of taking off our old selves and putting on our new selves in Christ.

Will this be easy? Not likely? Will it be humanly desired? I can't imagine so. But as children, obedient to a Kingly Father, we will be obeying Him through the honoring and obeying of our parents.

N: Now let's turn this over to my discussion partners, Cara and Arnie. Cara, give us a picture of what *honor your father and mother* means to you.

C: I would say to show respect for, so you might not agree, but to be respectful, but to also be obedient. Because I think obedience in particular is a fundamental building block of a home.

N: How do you exemplify that now as an adult? What does that look like?

C: To love them unconditionally. That I don't know, I would say, that I'd just be respectful of them. I'm not going to dishonor them and I love them. So does that answer your question?

N: Yeah, I think so. Because a lot of people are going to hear this message, and we talked about this for a while, but honoring your father and mother, again, doesn't mean obedience in the strictest sense. I mean, if you're living with them, then of course, you know what? You probably should be subject to their expectations and rules. But as adult children, respecting and honoring our father and mother, it doesn't look the same as that obedience of a child living in a household, rather it's, as you said, respecting them, honoring them, thinking of them, and also loving them unconditionally. I think you answered it beautifully. Okay Arnie, what about you? As a behaviorist, what do you see as some of the biggest traps parents fall into these days?

A: That's actually a pretty easy one. At least in my observation, it has been, it's very hard for parents today to say no. It's always a negotiation. We look at stimulus, response, reward. And when you start messing with that, it starts inviting all kinds of different behavioral issues. So the biggest trap I think parents really set for themselves, is "no" doesn't mean "no"; it means "maybe"; it means a long explanation; it means "yes". Those things tend to cause problems, in as the kids get older and into teen years, when they're used to not having very many consequences, and not being told "no" on minor things when they were younger.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Col 3:20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

N: Well, and I think you even see it in the culture as a whole, I mean, even today, there are no consequences, real consequences, at least, as a norm. There are exceptions. But I mean, think about in the last two weeks, we've seen a lot of unrest in the culture, and a lot of permission given to it. So I think it's continual, and it's perpetual at this point.

Okay. As we close out our time, I'd like to know, what can Christian parents do to help our kids make sense of all that's happened this year? I mean, it's been a year that I don't think will ever be forgotten. We've got a virus; we have injustice; we've got just, I think general unrest. The political phrase: it's such a chaotic world. So what can Christian parents do to help our kids make sense of it?

A: You know Nat, I think it's like anything else: God's still in control. You just have to keep your eyes focused on Him. And whether it's world events, or a little event, there's always some kind of crisis or drama going on. And that's Satan's way of distracting us.

N: Yeah. I think we need to be real intentional about what we're consuming, and how much we are consuming it. And also I think it's a unique opportunity we have as Christian parents, to remind our kids that we live in a fallen world, and the world will proceed and behave as such. So this is a great opportunity we have to reach out for the sake of the Gospel. And when the world is in chaos, and there is so much unrest, that is a ripe opportunity for us to go out and share the Good News of what Jesus Christ has done.