

**Thursday 06-25-20**

**SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD'S WAY**

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**TITLE: Parenting to the Fullest Pt. 4**

Well today we are continuing to look at godly values of parents who want to do parenting God's way. This is a theology of parenting, according to the Bible. Yesterday we discovered that to become a godly parent, we must be **God-centered**. In other words, we need to put God where He belongs, and that is in first place in our lives.

The second value was **spouse-focused**. In order to be a godly spouse, you need to put your spouse above any other human relationship. In another message in our family series, we said that our wives need to be cherished and loved, and husbands need to be respected and befriended.

The third value, to be a godly parent, you need **prayer**. In the Bible, we are called to pray without ceasing. We need to be praying for all areas of our lives, which, of course, means our children.

The fourth value we discovered yesterday was **grace**! Oh my, how can we, as parents, neglect grace?! We know that God's grace is sufficient, and it's also overflowing for the believer. We need to, therefore, share that same grace in our parenting.

*So to summarize, to be godly parents, we need to embrace the values of God-centered, spouse focused, prayer, and grace. But don't touch that dial! There's more.*

The 5<sup>th</sup> value is **humility**. James 4:6 (ESV) says, ["But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"](#) Here James is addressing fighting amongst believers, but the principle still stands. God opposes the proud, but gives more grace to those who see themselves rightly, and submit to Him.

In parenting, you need grace. Why? Because you're going to mess up, which should make you humble. My mom was a really good mom. She's still a good mom. And like all parents, she made mistakes. And she's had the humility to ask for forgiveness. And I've had no reason to not forgive her. She was humble, and I've been forgiven sooo much from God. How could I not forgive her?

I've had to become humble with my kids - not an equal in the sense of authority. Remember, as a parent, you are not called to be your child's friend. You are their parent. But even parents make mistakes. That's why humility is key.

I don't know if you're like me, but I've jumped to conclusions in a situation with my kids before even gathering the facts. I've swooped in, distributed discipline based on who is crying, and

come to find out what I thought happened, or who had committed the crime, was not correct. I was wrong. So I had to go back and apologize to my kids. That's humbling.

You have to be humble to be a godly parent. Your kids struggle with the same sins that you do. They just manifest the sin in different ways. We all struggle with anger. Being angry isn't sinful by itself, but rather what we do with it. So I may yell at my wife. That's sinful. My son may get angry and hit his brother. The same root of the problem is sin, but different action. That's humbling.

My son may say, "No. You can't play with that toy that's sitting there. It's mine." That's selfishness. That's sinful. Well, guess what? I struggle with that too. Because when I don't tithe, or give away what God has so freely given, but instead spend it on all my own pleasures, or just keep it in the bank, that is the same as saying, "No, God. It's mine!"

So remembering our own sinfulness helps us remain humble. So remember your dependence upon God for everything. Remember your own struggles. Remember when you sin against your kids, and quickly apologize and learn from it. Humility is a value to embrace when parenting God's way.

A sixth value for godly parenting is **understanding**.

Every person is different. Each child is different. Therefore, we, as godly parents, need to understand how God made our kids.

Remember what King David wrote in Psalm 139:13-14, "[For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup>I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.](#)" Each child is formed by the hand of God. In other words, they are special and a gift.

But what is challenging is you are you. And you probably understand your personality and appreciate it. But when you have a family, you have differing personality types and characteristics. I mean, think about it. There are extroverts and introverts. Talkers and listeners. Spenders and savers. Drivers, who move fast and want to get it done. Expressives, who are fast and want to get the picture. Amiables, who are slower and want to get along. And there are analytics, who are slower and want to get it right. Right there, you face a lot of variation.

And then you get into love languages. Dr. Gary Chapman, who will be back on the show with me tomorrow, wrote the book, *The 5 Love Languages of Children*. In that book, he says people want to experience love in 1 primary and 1 secondary way. Those languages are words of affirmation, gifts, quality time, acts of service, and physical touch.

So as parents we are wired one way, but chances are, think of the different combinations your kids could be. As parents, if we are going to parent effectively and in a godly way, we need to understand who they are, and how God made them. And friends, nothing is wrong with how they are made. Yes, they are sinful. That's a result of a sin nature. But outside of that sin, they are fearfully and wonderfully made. So as godly parents, we should seek how God has made them, and begin to lean into it. I don't mean to become it, but understand, appreciate, and adapt how we communicate with and love them.

But let me add another element of understanding. Understanding goes beyond just knowing their wiring; it also means taking time to gain understanding the heart of your child. This is especially true when disciplining children.

At the core of behavior is a reason - I'm not saying a good logical reason - but something that is triggering behavior. As a godly parent, I want to know why. This doesn't dismiss sin, but it does get to the heart of training a child. It begins with understanding.

For example, you come home from work, and you immediately sit down on the couch and turn on the TV. Your kid goes up to his sibling and hits them in the face. Why? Well, that's your job to find out. Is it because they're just a little pagan? Maybe. But you may find out that they want your attention, because you've been gone all day and they want to connect with you. Granted, the behavior is wrong, but the root of it is a desire for the attention of a parent. But a quick punishment wouldn't give you that information. Understanding will.

So to be a godly parent, you must value understanding.

### **DISCUSSION:**

N: And now let me turn to my discussion partner, Arnie Cole. What has been the best tool to help you understand your kids?

A: Probably the most effective tool that I ever learned - and I don't know what they call it now - but back in the day, when I was training to be a therapist, they had what was called the Rogerian method. And basically, you weren't allowed to say anything of substance other than "Uh huh", "Mm-hm", "Oh, wow." "That's interesting." "Mm-hm", and basically, listen, shut up and listen. And oftentimes, kids just want to be heard and listened to, and that's probably the strongest tool. And we even did studies: your "Uh huh" and "Mm-hm" actually can be far more powerful than telling, "No, you can't do that." Just that dialogue.

N: Mm, mm-hm. [Mm-hm] Yeah, yeah. That's really good. [Yeah, ooo. Yeah.] Mm-hm. Yeah. Oh, that's fascinating. [Yeah]. I like that. [See?] Yeah. [Let the children go].

Well, and I think we can see that to be an effective tool, even in everyday relationships. And that can be really hard, but just to show that engagement. The problem is, I will say this, when you try this with your spouse, trust me, they will ask you the random question of, "What did I just say?" [And you say, "Uh-huh"], so you better not just be pretending, right? [Yeah] Yeah, uh huh, mm-hm, [Oh yeah]. Yeah. Oh man. My wife just learned all the secrets. That's great.

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So, we've been talking about the important values of parenting. We covered that understanding is vitally important. Well, understanding leads to another value for godly parenting. And that value is **teaching**. Parents are teachers. In fact, I'd argue you are your kids' most important teacher. Parents are to teach God's Word. Deuteronomy 6:7 says, "[You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.](#)" You are to teach them God's Word:

How to study God's Word; How to apply God's Word. You teach them the reality and the power of God's Word by speaking it, living it, and reacting through it.

What do I mean by that? Your kids are always watching...even when you think they're not, they really are. They listen to how you speak about yourself, your spouse, about neighbors, etc. They're listening and also watching. They want to see how you live. Is there a disconnect about what you say, what you read in the Bible, what you preach, and how you live?

But I think one of the most valuable experiences your kids will learn, is how you react to life's experiences. Your reactions show or teach what you really believe. For example, you're singing a praise song in the car, and your car dies...again. Do you curse? Do you panic? Do you begin to get angry, because again you have no money, and this hunk-o-junk is killing you? How do you react? They're watching. You're teaching.

You receive an extra \$1000 from work, what do you do? How do you react? Do you thank God and give away part of it to advance the Kingdom of God, or do you blow it as quickly as you can? Your kids are watching. You're teaching.

Who or what do you turn to when you need guidance? Do you turn to Google? Facebook? Twitter? Oprah Magazine? Or do you turn to God's Word? Your kids are watching. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "[All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,](#) <sup>17</sup>[that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.](#)"

The Bible is the rule of faith for us as believers. God's Word is *a lamp unto our feet and a light unto God's path*. If we don't read it, we won't know how to live and where to go. That's why we have to use it daily in our lives and integrate it into the lives of our children. This is intimidating. At least it was for me early on in our family. So, where do you begin? Well, there's no perfect answer. We've used daily devotionals at dinner time. We've read through books of the Bible over the course of bedtime routines. We've listened to the Bible while driving. Pick something and stick with it.

Another great tool is Back to the Bible's goTandem app. Your family can use this free app that sends you custom verses and content, based on the areas you want to grow in. Another tool is our website, [backtothebible.app](http://backtothebible.app). There you'll find many great reading plans that vary from daily to weekly, videos, and follow up discussions.

But whatever you do, stick with it. Remember, you're teaching, and your kids are watching.

The seventh value for godly parenting is **discipline**. I hate to break it to those new parents out there: your cute little baby will turn into a sinner with a wild streak. And here's the crazy thing, you won't teach it to them. They're born with it.

Don't believe me? Go spend 5 minutes in the toddler room at church...when those things are back from COVID-19. But go watch. You will see quickly that kids don't have to be taught to be naughty. The cute little girl will be playing with her dolly. Another girl comes over and grabs the dolly and says, "Mine." And runs away. The cute little girl will run to the girl and punch her, take the doll and hide. No one taught them that. That wasn't learned. That's natural. That's sin.

We as parents, need to teach our kids to be good, and that's called discipline. But let me clarify something. Discipline is not punishment. Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Discipline is a word here that means correction. We are to help correct their behavior for a better future, and not to shame them for their past mistakes.

Listen to what Hebrews 12:7-10 says, "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. <sup>9</sup> Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness."

Two things I need to point out. First, our discipline results in a child's respect. Children don't need and don't appreciate anarchy. They desire and appreciate structure and discipline. It's beneficial.

Second, verse 10 says, "they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them." In other words, the discipline is appropriate. There isn't a one size fits all for discipline. But what is important is, as we understand our children, we know what they want, what they'll respond to, and what also will honor God.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs in his book, *Love & Respect in the Family* suggests in general, when disciplining children, to:

- 1) Create rules that are clear and fair.
- 2) Confront and correct without anger.
- 3) Enact consequences when necessary.
- 4) Reward obedience and reaffirm love no matter what.

Remember, you do not want to crush the spirit of the child, but encourage and correct.

This brings us to our last value to being a godly parent. And that value is **encourage**.

In my years of counseling, one of the deepest wounds is the wound of a dissatisfied parent. People would come into my office with deep wounds. They were often successful in business, in life, and in whatever endeavor they were pursuing. However, they often felt incomplete. They felt they still hadn't achieved enough. Why? They desired the approval from their parents, but they never were good enough.

Don't believe me? Consider the subject of the documentary series: *The Last Dance*. The Last Dance is all about Michael Jordan and his last season with the Chicago Bulls. Well, in 1993, after winning his 3<sup>rd</sup> NBA championship, Jordan left basketball to pursue baseball. Why? His father was tragically murdered that year. Jordan's father was always challenging Jordan to push harder and do better. And Jordan's father wished Jordan would have played baseball. James Jordan liked basketball, but loved baseball. So arguably, the greatest of all-time basketball

players left during the height of his career, to honor his father and seek that approval he never could earn.

Listen to some verses from Proverbs. Proverbs 21:23 says, “Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.” In other words, choose your words wisely. If your mouth is a loose cannon, be prepared for trouble. Proverbs 16:24 says, “Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.” In other words, use your words for good and to build up. It restores the soul and nourishes the person.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs has some solid advice to encourage your children. Dr. Eggerichs says, 1) encourage them as life happens. Life will be hard. It will be disappointing. It will crush their hopes. As parents, we need to encourage them. Help them see life through a biblical lens. We need to let them know we love them no matter what.

2) Encourage who they are and what they do. As parents, we need to catch and encourage our kids when they’re succeeding. We must guard against watching to catch them failing.

3) Encourage who and what they can become. Now, this doesn’t mean drive them to be an accountant if you’re an accountant, or a preacher if you’re a preacher. Or push them in areas because you wish you would have done it yourself. Encourage your child to be a man or woman of God. Encourage them to lean into their spiritual gifts, their heart, their abilities, personality, etc. Be their coach and cheerleader, but not their dictator.

Parenting is a gift. It’s a blessing. And it’s a challenge. But by God’s grace, we can do it God’s way. These values are biblical and essential to train a child up in the way he or she should go. No matter what season of life you’re in today, know that God’s grace is sufficient. He loves you, and He is there for you. Lean into His grace, and He will carry you through.

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N: Once again, let me bring in Arnie Cole. Arnie, you've been through parenting children through to adulthood. So do they need more or less encouragement as adults?

A: I think they need about the same level of encouragement, but it's different types of encouragement. When they're a kid, they need a lot of affirmation and maybe some direction. When they become adults, it's more affirmation, and only give direction when asked. So it kind of changes over time, but yes, encouragement is the key to all of it.

N: Arnie, what happens when a child's spirit is crushed, and what's the impact?

A: You know, that’s something that happens, and sadly enough, most of the time, it's not the child's fault. However, most of the time, when their spirit’s crushed, they blame it on themselves. And then you've just got a very sad, disastrous situation on your hands, that oftentimes, you may even need some professional help to get through it.

N: Yeah. The reality is the effects of a spirit crushed can be long term, but I think we also know of what's possible with Christ and the impact he makes on our lives. And so things can be recovered and things can be healed, but it does take time and it's not overnight. So we would

encourage you: no matter what season of life you're in, whether you're a parent, a grandparent, a single parent, it doesn't matter. We encourage you to rest in God's grace, turn to Him when you need help, and allow Him to continue to move in you and through you. No matter what mistakes you may have made in the past, remember God is for you, and He will continue to do work in your life.