

Godly Parenting

Part 1

Good morning, I'm Pastor Tami, associate pastor at the OP campus. My husband, Erik, and I have spent the last 20 years parenting our three children. And I would argue, parenting today is way harder than it was a generation or two ago. The culture around us has changed drastically and as a result we are navigating things with our kids that our parents, our grandparents, never had to navigate.

Now, let me set you straight from the get go. I don't stand up here today because Erik and I are any kind of parenting experts. We definitely are not and our kids would be happy to provide you with an itemized list of our mistakes over the last 20 years (they have them listed chronologically, alphabetically, in order of severity - whatever you like). If you are here today hoping to glean some expert parenting advice for today's generation, you will likely leave disappointed because, I truly have no advice for you.

I do however, happen to know someone who is a perfect Father. And He knows all about raising Godly kids in an ungodly world, mainly because He has been doing it for thousands of years now! God called his children out of Egypt and he sent them into a ungodly, pagan land to raise their kids; and he commanded them to pass down to those kids a faith that was so strong that he would use them to bless the entire world. The truth that God revealed through His word then, is the same truth we can cling to and follow today. So for the next several weeks we will be exploring what God has to say about raising His children in a world that is set against him.

Before we get started, I want to make sure you know that regardless of what your family looks like, whether it is a two parent household, a single parent household or a multigenerational household; whether you have one child, multiple children, step children, foster children or no children. God loves your family and so do we. God wants to see your family flourish and so do we. God cares far less about what your family looks like and far more about how your family loves and honors Him. And, if you aren't part of a "traditional" family, whatever that might mean, or your children are grown and you're tempted to zone out, I hope you don't do that. You ARE part of the family of God and He absolutely has a role for you to play in the raising of the next generation.

I'm curious if any of you have ever called a "Family Meeting" in your household? In our house they don't happen very often, but when they do, it is either 1. we have some big news to share or 2. Erik and I feel like things have gotten a little out of control; and the family unit is not behaving in the manner that we want our family unit to behave. And in the calling of the family meeting we are telling the kids we mean business. And we expect them to listen in such a way that it then causes a change in their behavior. And usually, right before we get to the "come to Jesus" moment, we make sure we

have their undivided attention -that they are really “listening” - before we dive into the heart of the matter.

That is essentially what Moses is doing in the three verse prior to today's passage. Moses has called a “family meeting” - for all of Israel. The meeting actually started in chapter 5 and now in chapter 6 he is ready to get to the heart of the matter. But first he preps them. He explains that what he is about to say is something they will very much want to listen to. The commandment he is about to share is something that God has commanded Moses to teach to them. That it is imperative that they follow this command in the ungodly land that God is sending them to - because it is in the following this command that they will demonstrate their fear of the Lord - theirs/their sons/their son's sons. Last week Pastor Jim preached on the necessity of a proper Fear of the Lord. This is a fear of God based on respect that comes from an appreciation of His character, and it produces in us obedience and worship. It's the kind of fear and respect one hopes to find between children and their parents.

Moses tells his family that the fruit of following this command he is about to give them, that demonstrates their fear of the Lord, the fruit of following this is that things will go well for them in the ungodly land that flows with milk and honey. And then Moses gives them the command.

Would you please stand and read with me today's passage Deuteronomy 6:4-9

4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **5** You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. **6** And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. **7** 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. **8** You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. **9** You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Those of you who are much more knowledgeable in Jewish history and Biblical Hebrew than I am, know that this passage of scripture is very important to those of the Jewish faith. It is known as the Shema; and it was and still is recited twice a day by faithful Jews. There is so much that could be taught on this passage of scripture -it could be a 8 week sermon series just by itself, but today we are going to look at it strictly from the perspective of parenting, because it is in this passage that we find God's plan for Godly parenting in an ungodly world. He tells us

1. The GOAL of Godly Parenting
2. The STRATEGY for Godly Parenting

3. The STEPS to Godly Parenting

1. The GOAL of Godly Parenting

As followers of Jesus, the goal of anything and everything we do should be to glorify God. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Man's Chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. That is the goal of everything we do... including our parenting. And it is really important to identify what your parenting goal is, because if you don't know what you're aiming for, then you'll miss the mark every single time. If you don't have a specific goal in mind as you parent your kids, you'll end up being reactive instead of proactive. You spend all your time and energy reacting to your kids behaviors, mistakes, temperaments and tantrums, rather than being proactive and pursuing with intention the goal you have set. It's really, really important to know what your goal is.

And it is equally important to have the right goal. There are plenty of goals out there that you could choose. And the vast majority of them are really good goals. Most of us want our kids to be successful, to be a positive contributor to society. That is a natural and appropriate goal. We want our kids to respect authority, to be good kids, who get good grades, and go to a good college so they can live a good life. Those are good goals. But in Godly Parenting they aren't the ultimate goal. Moses begins this great command to his family - the command that will demonstrate their fear of the Lord and lead them to prolonged life in an ungodly world where they bless the nations, with the one thing that has always been central to their nations faith. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."

This was the foundational truth of the Israelite nation. And with this truth comes their foundational duty, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

This was the core of their faith then and it is the core of our Christian faith now. This is what Jesus told us was the most important commandment. The goal of Godly parenting is that our children would proclaim the Lord their God is one. And they would love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

We want our children to believe in their very being that Jesus Christ is God and to love him with everything they have.

When this is the goal of parenting, the thing we aim for above all else, then everything we do is to meet this end - that our kids would know and love Jesus and do everything

for His glory; and then everything else falls into its proper place because God becomes more important than good grades, correct behavior, playing on the best baseball team, whether or not they go to college, or any of those other “good” goals. The truth is when you are aiming at the wrong goal, you are very likely to end up in the wrong place.

Now let me be clear, the focus in Godly parenting is not your child’s behavior - their morality, purity, scripture memory, or grade point average. I know it’s tempting, these things are so tangible and so easy for you - and the watching world - to see. But their not the goal.

John 15:8 tells us, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit...” Deuteronomy tells us the goal of parenting is to glory God. The gospel of John tells us God is glorified when we bear much fruit.

What does it mean to bear much fruit? Fruit is the direct result of whatever controls our hearts. According to Galatians 5, the fruit of a life not surrendered to Jesus includes “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage.” In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit of God is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). As Christians we bear fruit from the posture of our heart, the words we say, the relationships we have, the witness we give, and the gospel we share.

Your kids can be good moral, pure, scripture memorizing, smart people, who live successful lives in the eyes of the world and still live fruitless lives in Christ. Way too often the successes of the world end up pulling us away from God. Moses warns the Israelites of this very thing in Chap 6 and again in chapter 8. He tells them to

11 “Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, **12** lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, **13** and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, **14** then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, **15** who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, **16** who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. **17** Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’”
Deuteronomy 8:11-17

Success has a way of pulling us and our children away from God. And when your end goal is anything other than glorifying God it is really really easy for your kids to miss glorifying Him all together.

So here's the good news, when the goal is loving the Lord with everything you have, being fruitful and glorifying God, then God can use anything our kids do - bad or good - for His glory. When morality or purity or a sports team or college is the goal when - you children make a mistake or miss that goal, are they now failures? Did you fail? Do you need to find a plan B? When you parent with God as the goal, with God as the target, you know what you are aiming for and even when your kids mess up, because if there is one thing I have learned in 20 years of parenting, it's that your children will mess up, it doesn't necessarily mean they've missed the mark. Because God can make beauty out of ashes. And even the biggest mistakes God can and does work for His glory.

And when your kids flourish and become huge successes who change the world as I am confident your kids are going to do based on some of your Facebook posts - they don't take the glory for themselves but give it all to God, because that is what they have been raised to do.

Moses wants our focus and our children's focus to be on God first - that is the goal of Godly parenting. So then what is the strategy to make this happen?

2. The Strategy for Godly Parenting

Moses gives us a two part strategy for Godly parenting, we model and we impress. He says in verses 6-7, "...and these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children..." Some translations of verse 7 read "impress" them on your children. I love that term. We are taught thousands of things throughout our lifetime. I couldn't even begin to remember all the things I have been taught that I now forgotten. But to impress one thing onto another thing is change that thing, to leave a mark or imprint on it, a permanent indentation. The strategy of Godly parenting isn't to impress our children, but to impress upon our children the Word of God. We are to make an imprint of God on our children's hearts so that their hearts will forever bear the mark of the Lord.

But before you can diligently teach these things to your children, before you can impress them upon their hearts. The commands need to be on your heart. In ancient Hebrew the heart wasn't necessarily the center of emotional life like we think of it, rather it was the place of intellect or the rational side of humankind. To 'be upon the heart' then meant to be in one's constant, conscious thought, to be part of one's inner self, will, or mind. And as familiar as the command to love the Lord you God with all

your heart and soul and might is to us today, this is actually the first time they appear in Scripture. When Moses gave this command to his family it was the first time they had ever heard it. Prior to this they had been given rules to follow, now they were being told to fall in love with God. Moses wasn't trying to control or modify their behavior, he was going after their heart. The strategy for Godly parenting is to parent our children's heart, not their behavior, and this starts with making sure our heart is centered on Jesus.

Because what is in our heart will always be played out in our action. Actions speak louder than words. Your children are watching to see how, when, and if you glorify God. They are watching what's in your heart.

If you are here today because you want to raise good, moral, ethical kids, but you yourself don't have a relationship with Jesus. That is where you need to start. And we would love to partner with you on that. We have people who would love to introduce you to Jesus and help lead you into a personal relationship with Him. And once Jesus is in your heart, you can help your kids experience Him as well. Please call me or email me if you want to know more about how you can have a personal relationship with Jesus. Email tlundgren@colonialkc.org 816-501-3939

The first part of the strategy for Godly parenting is for you to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, to have His commands upon your heart and in your mind; and to model this relationship to your kids with your words and more importantly with your actions.

Now trust me, your going to screw this up! No parent is perfect, nor are you expected to be. And one of the best examples, one of the best models you can give your kids is to own up to your mistakes. I promise you, you aren't going to shock them - they are well aware of your imperfections, if they are like my kids, they have a running list. And when you can own up to the mistakes you make, when you can confess your sin, before them and before God, you give them a powerful example to follow. When you try to cover up your sin, when you refuse to show them your struggles and you weakness (that they are most likely seeing anyway) you come across as hypocritical and self-seeking. Are your kids watching a show of faith you are simply acting out or are they watching authentic faith?

The second part of the strategy is to impress that faith on your children; leave an indomitable imprint of God on their heart. And this won't be accomplished in one hour a week on Sunday morning. It has to be part of everything you do. Because everything we do, we do for the glory of God. The goal of Godly parenting is that our children would proclaim the Lord their God is one. And they would love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. The strategy of Godly parenting is to pursue their

hearts rather than their behavior by modeling your heart for Jesus and impressing upon their hearts the imprint of God.

3. The STEPS to Godly Parenting

The steps to Godly parenting are to create rhythms in your life that constantly and continually point to God.

Moses gives his family some pretty specific steps to follow in verses 7b-9. “Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. **8** Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. **9** Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

Moses tells his people you are going to need regular and consistent rhythms in your every day life if you want your kids to love God like this. And honestly, this makes so much sense to us today doesn't it? In the hustle and bustle of modern life, it's so easy for families to become disconnected, and we miss out on valuable opportunities to model and impress on our children. Even secular resources today recognize the importance of family rhythms and rituals, “From simple daily routines to special occasions, these shared experiences hold incredible power in fostering a close-knit, loving family dynamic. Family rituals are not just mundane routines; they are the building blocks of a strong familial bond. Whether it's the cherished Sunday brunch tradition, bedtime storytelling, or annual holiday celebrations, these rituals provide a sense of stability, security, and belonging.”(Gottman Marriage Institute)

Once again science proves the Bible true!

But thousands of years ago, the Israelites were in the wilderness, coming out of Egypt, and this had to sound kind of weird to them, surely they were looking at each other, thinking “isn't this what we've been doing?” God had already put some very tangible rhythms in place to keep Himself in the center of Israelite life. Each morning they had to gather the manna; every day they traveled they followed a pillar smoke by day and pillar of fire by night. They weren't tempted to swing by chic-fil-a on the way to soccer practice for one kid while the other parent took the youngest to ballet. They didn't have to contend with Netflix or social media for their kids attention (or their attention). There was no Monday Night Football or house to clean or lawn to mow. Surely they of all people didn't need to be told to create rhythms in order to remember the Lord their God!

But God knew that things were going to change pretty drastically for the Israelites once they got to the promised land. Even though the land flowed with milk and honey, they would have to work the land in order to experience its bounty. And in that land of plenty they would have to be more conscious about creating rhythms; they would need to be intentional about impressing their faith upon their children; they would need to establish their own visual reminders of God's power and grace; they would have to be creative in telling God's story to their kids.

Still, even though things would be different and they would have new challenges that could potentially pull them away from God, God sent them into the pagan land. He didn't keep his people in the wilderness where their daily dependence on Him was built into the environment. Instead he led them to an ungodly land and gave them the strategy and steps to keep their faith alive from one generation to the next. Because God knew that it was through His people that He would BLESS the nations, and he had to send them out into an ungodly world in order to do that.

But in order to stand out in this new culture, in order to hold fast to their identity and their faith, there needed to be rhythms in their life and tangible reminders in their homes about who and whose they were. This would help them impress an imprint of God on the heart of their children. Moses told the people to build rhythms into their day that allowed them to talk about who God was, and what He had done for them, and how they were to respond to Him in love

- When they sat at home
- When they walked along the road
- When they lie down
- When they get up
- They were to tie them on their hands
- And bind them on your foreheads.
- They were to write them on the doorframes of their houses and on their gates.

If Moses were writing this today it might read more like "impress Me upon the hearts of your children in the evenings, instead of turning on the TV; talk about how I have been present in your life and their life as you drive them to soccer and dance and math camp, after your kids brush their teeth at night recap all the ways I was there throughout the day. When they wake up in the morning remind them to thank me for

the new day. Maybe you want to wear a cross around your neck, or tattoo a bible verse on your wrist, maybe you want to put my words on the walls of your house. Whatever you choose to do, do it for my glory that your kids would see your faith, and would learn from you to love me with all their heart and soul and strength. Maybe that is what he would say today.

Thousands of years ago, the Israelites took these words from very, very literally. In fact, by Jesus day, the Pharisees were making this a somewhat obnoxious display of religion. They would take tiny scrolls with the Ten Commandments and other passages of scripture on them, and put them in little boxes called *phylacteries*, and they would tie them on the back of their left hand or on their forehead right between their eyes, and they would walk around with them hanging in the middle of their forehead. And they literally wrote scripture on the doorposts, gates, and outer entrances of their houses. This was a very wooden and legalistic following of Scripture and in Matthew 23 Jesus rebuked them for "making broad their phylacteries and enlarging the hems of their garments" just to get attention and make it visible that they were super religious people.

And some of us still do this today. It is a whole lot easier to wear a gold cross around our neck than to bear Christ's cross in our day to day life, it is far simpler to hang Scripture on our walls than to hide God's Word in our hearts.

The steps to Godly parenting can't be legalistic. They are given so that you can figure out the best way for your family to integrate those types of rhythms into your day to day routines.

And Colonial wants to help you do that. Each week both our children's ministry and our student ministries send out emails not only about what they are doing but how you can partner with them at home. They send you ideas and resources to help you become Godly parents. To get those emails contact our children's or student ministries directors

- OP Children's Ministry: Glenn Menke, gmenke@colonialkc.org
- OP Student Ministries: Michael Otto, motto@colonialkc.org
- SKC Children's Ministry: Cailin Renwick, crenwick@colonialkc.org
- SKC Student Ministries: Greg Ealey, gealey@colonialkc.org

We've also created a resource list for you in conjunction with this sermon series. A list of websites and books that might help you navigate parenting in this generation. It is

certainly not exhaustive list, there are lots of great parenting books and resources out there, but it will hopefully give you some ideas. You can find it on our website under todays manuscript at colonialkc.org/watch. There will also be a link to it in enews tomorrow.

And finally this fall, Colonial will be offering a parenting class called Spiritual Parenting based on Michelle Anthony, there will be large group time and small group time. It will be a great opportunity to really dig into God's instructions for parents and to discuss it with other people who desire to be Godly parents. Whether you have very young children, elementary age or are parenting through the teen years this is a great class. It will start Sunday Sept 10, 3:30-5:30

Hopefully, as you and Colonial partner together, we can raise kids who proclaim the Lord their God is one; kids who will love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. Hopefully, you will model your love for Jesus and impress the imprint of God upon your child's heart and develop rhythms for your family that keep Christ at the center. And together our kids will one day BLESS the nations just as God designed them to.

Let's pray.