

Sunday, April 3, 2011—Grace For a Godly Family

Introduction

- Ephesians 6:1-4—after being a father for 6 years I am convinced that being a parent is one of the most difficult challenges believers face. None of us wants to mess up our kids.
- We all want our children to believe the gospel of grace for their eternal salvation. Moreover, it would also be nice if our kids would embrace the message of grace and remain in the doctrine for the duration of their lives.
- Yet, many of us worry we are screwing up our kids. In fact, many are burdened with guilt over past failures and fear of future mistakes.
- Many of us fall back on our default setting, and parent our children similarly to the way our parents raised us. As we all know, this type of copy cat parenting is not always good.
- Colossians 3:21—so how do we raise our kids in such as fashion that we don't provoke them to wrath and discouragement.

Ineffective Parenting Models

- 3 John 1:4—what is the goal of parenting? The proof of an effective parenting model lies in how prepared our children are to enter the world of adulthood and not be intimidated by those who do not share our Biblical worldview.
- The proof that any model of parenting is effective is not how the parents and children get along. It isn't even how well they treat and respect each other after they are all grown up. Even nonreligious families can accomplish this.
- The real test of a parenting model is how well equipped the children are to move into adulthood as vital members of the human race. Notice I didn't say "as vital members of the Christian community."
- II Corinthians 10:12—grace based parents ought not measure the effectiveness of their parenting by comparing their kids to others, for this will surely led down the path of legalism.
- Tim Kimmel, author of *Grace Based Parenting* discusses the following seven ineffective parental mindsets in descending order beginning with the most prevalent.
 - *Fear-Based Parents*—are scared of Hollywood, the Internet, the public school system, Halloween, drugs, alcohol, rock'n'roll, rap, unbelieving softball teams, and liberals. "Fear based parents assume that obedience to a stricter and tighter standard will somehow help them raise better children. As a result, fear drives these parents to erect unnecessary defenses around their children under the misguided notion that God's favor for having done so will protect their kids. "Fear based parenting is the surest way to create intimidated kids. It's also the surest way to raise Christian kids who either don't have any passion for lost

people, are indifferent to the things of God, or out-and-out rebel against their parents, their church, and the Lord."

- *Evangelical Behavior-Modification Parents*—"this is an offshoot of fear-based parenting that assumes the proper environment, the proper information, the proper education, and the absence of negative influences will increase the chances of a child's turning out well. This parenting plan works from two flawed assumptions: 1) the battle is primarily outside the child (it's not); and 2) that spiritual life can be transferred onto a child's hear much like information is placed on a computer hard drive (it can't)."
- *Image-Control Parents*—adhere to a checklist method of parenting that is part of the seduction of legalism. "Image—control parenting assumes that people will know you are a good Christian parent raising nice Christian offspring by your church attendance, the way you dress (or don't dress), the way you cut your hair (or don't), the words and expressions you use (or don't use), the schools you attend (or don't attend), the movies you see (or don't see), or the amount of Scripture you can quote." In short, all decisions are made based on how the family will appear to others.
- *High-Control Parents*—"There is a vast difference between parents who keep their children *under* control and parents who control *them*. High-control parenting happens when we leverage the strength of our personality or our position against our children's weaknesses to get them to meet our selfish agenda. This form of parenting is fueled by a combination of toxic fear, toxic anger, toxic bondage, toxic shame, and toxic strength." "High-control parents are blind to how they are treating their children because high-controllers can always morally justify every move they make. Because they are so convinced that their controlling tendency is *right*, they can't see how destructive its effect is on their children." These parents are easily frustrated when their children fail to conform to their standards. Moreover, they are almost never willing to admit when they are wrong.
- *Herd-Mentality Parents*—"these are parents who follow the crowd . . . These parents aren't known for thinking as individuals. Instead they follow the fads in how they eat, dress, vacation, educate their kids, and worship." Rather than knowing their children individually and applying God's word to each situation, Herd-Mentality parents look around and parent like everyone else.
- *Duct-Tape Parents*—"rather than figure out how to fix their parenting issues, these families cope by patching their problems. Temporary solutions are sought when crisis arise. These families are usually running on empty—to busy, too many bills, and too focused on the immediate rather than the permanent."
- *Life-Support or 911 Parents*—"these homes are much like the duct-tape families but with the added feature that a particular crisis is dominating their focus. They may be consumed with a medical or economic crisis. Or the crisis may be the result of the deterioration or collapse of a marriage."
- These seven defective parenting models all suffer from one common problem. They are the result of a parent's theology. Your theology is a combination of the way they view

God and the way they think He views them. If we have flawed theology regarding God's attitude towards us, it will automatically create a chain reaction of flawed decisions in how we raise our children. It can also set up our children to miss the joy of God, the heart of God, and the power of God in their personal lives. This is a recipe for the child to rebel and reject a parent's primary belief system.

- This is a powerful truth: **how we view God determines how we parent our children.** For those of us who call ourselves grace believers, and claim to be living the grace life, we need to consider these questions:
 - Do we truly apply what we say believe about God's grace when we deal with our children?
 - What are we teaching our kids about God through how we parent them.
- Much of what our children believe about God in their early years is formed through the type of leadership we provide for our children. In short, we need to parent our kids the way God deals with us, in grace.
- Judgmental and legalistic parents fail to communicate to their children the unconditional love and grace of God.
- *Judgmental Parents*—"spend most of their time making sure their family is better than the ones around them. They live to monitor everyone else. Their children are supposed to support their concerns about what is wrong with everyone around them. If you were to see them in action, you would notice them pointing their fingers at others and having little to do with anyone who doesn't see life their way. They can be especially hard on children who don't accept their narrow view of life." Their advice to their children is a mixture of: 'God is watching you, and so am I,' and 'You may be bad, but you're better than so-and-so.' "When it comes to boundaries, their exhortation to their children would be: "if it feels good, it's probably wrong!" When it comes to God, they are so distracted by looking down on other families that don't see life their way, they don't really enjoy God much."
- *Legalistic Parents*—"spend most of their time trying to make sure their family does everything right. They live to keep score of their own good deeds. Their children are supposed to help them stack up "brownie points" with God. If you watch them in action, they appear burdened and stressed out. They are especially hard on children who don't toe the line." Their advice to their kids is a combination of: 'You owe God so you better get busy,' and 'You may be bad, but if you try harder, you can ultimately please God.' "When it comes to boundaries, their exhortation to their children would be: "if it feels good, stop it!" They assume that what God demands of them should be their primary business. When it comes to God, they feel they need to reimburse Him."

Grace Based Parenting

- Colossians 2:6—contrasted with judgmental or legalistic parents, those who rear their children with grace as their model are inherently unafraid of the evil that surrounds them. Grace-based parents understand their own propensity toward sin. As a result, the grace and forgiveness they have received from Christ motivates them to love and good deeds for the right reasons.

- Not motivated by the need to do penance, grace-based families don't stand in judgment over struggling people. Rather, they see themselves in struggling people and understand how much of God's love they have received. Consequently, kids reared in a Grace-based home are daily recipients of the same grace their parents rejoice in.
- Grace-based parents offer the following advice to their children: 'you are a gift from God; go make a difference 'and' you may struggle doing the right thing sometimes, but you're forgiven.' When it comes to boundaries, grace-based parents teach, "if it feels good, examine it in light of God's word rightly divided."
- Grace-based parenting uses Christ's relationship with us as a model for dealing with our children. Therefore it focuses on the three needs of every child.
 - A Secure Love
 - A Significant Purpose
 - A Strong Hope

A Secure Love

- At the core of grace is love—a love that delights in us in spite of our sin and comes to us free of charge. Love emanates straight from the heart of God.
 - Romans 5:8-9
- While all parents would admit to loving their children there is a big difference between desiring to love them and actually loving them in such a way that they feel secure are two different things.
- What do we mean by a secure love? A secure love is the kind of love they can default to when their hearts are under attack and confidently carry with them into their futures.
- This transfer of love is the result of parents loving their children the way God loves them. It's called grace.
- Romans 8:35-39—there is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ
- Ephesians 1:6—we are accepted in the beloved
- Sometimes as parents we communicate to our children incomplete love.
 - *Sometimes our love is incomplete because our children feel they constantly to compete for it.*
 - We tell them we love them and then they watch us make decisions regarding our careers, our friends, and our pastimes that directly undermine our ability to invest the time in them that love requires.
 - *Sometimes our love is incomplete because our children feel like they have to earn it.*
 - They figure out that they receive our praise and pride when they do things that make us look good or make our jobs as parents easier.

Love Defined

Love is the commitment of my will
to your needs and best interests,
regardless of the cost.

- Love sees our needs as a B priority compared to the best interests of the person we are called to love. It is not in our children's best interest to: give them everything they want, side with them when they are wrong, circumvent the consequences for their sins, facilitate false fears, fight their battle for them, or rescue them from wrong choices. Love is about meeting their actual needs not their selfish needs.
- Secure love understands that loving someone is often inconvenient and sometimes painful. Loving your kids costs money, time, and sleep. It might cost a mom decades in time originally planned to spend on her career. It might cost her her figure. It might cost her a promotion. It might mean that there are some amenities or lavish vacation you must do without. It definitely means eating crow, swallowing your pride, and asking for forgiveness a lot.
- Practical Tips for Demonstrating Secure Love
 - *Children feel secure when they know they are accepted as they are.* (Ephesians 1:6)
 - There are attitudes our children display that we never have to accept: selfishness, disrespect, deceit, are not to be condoned or tolerated.
 - I am talking about those things our children do to annoy, frustrate, or embarrass us that are simply them being who they are. Every time we point these things out, we tell them that they don't measure up.
 - Boys are berated because they are noisy, messy, or aggressive. Girls are often criticized for being too emotional, picky, or overly sensitive. Some kids are criticized for being slow, forgetful, or inquisitive, or for saying whatever pops into their heads.
 - As parents when we accept our kids unique characteristics we hold the same gracious unconditional acceptance that God has for us.
 - *Children feel secure when they know they are affiliated with a loving and God honoring family.* (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6)
 - Children know when Mom and Dad are playing church. When the grace life they talk about at church is manifest toward them.
 - Homes of honor understand forgiveness, communicate virtue, and place a high value on doing things according to the principals of Grace.
 - Parents need to be willing to admit when they are wrong as seek their children's forgiveness.
 - *Children feel secure love when they receive regular and generous helping of affection.* (Titus 2:4)
 - God has hard-wired our skin to our souls. Somehow, He saw fit to configure our outer covering to be one of the greatest tools for transferring a sense of secure love.
 - Both genders need it from both parents.

- Even teenagers still need touch, and deep down in their hearts they want it. They to know that someone isn't ashamed or afraid to touch them. This crucial during a time when many teens feel unattractive and untouchable.

A Significant Purpose

- Significant purpose can only be found in Jesus Christ
 - I Corinthians 12:12-27
 - II Corinthians 4:11
 - II Corinthians 5:20
 - Titus 2:1-8
- Neutrality is not an option for our children. They will either embrace God's truth or run from it.
- Tim Kimmel, author of *Grace Based Parenting*, speak about four kinds of purpose kids need:
 - *General Purpose*—basic view of esteeming others as better than one's self. (Philippians 2:3)
 - *Specific Purpose*—helping children develop workable skills in every area of their lives and to refine areas of specific talent. (Ephesians 4:28)
 - *Relational Purpose*—is grounded on relating to others in relation to God's moral standards recorded in Scripture. (Titus 2:12)
 - *Spiritual Purpose*—a spiritual beings Children need to be instructed to find their ultimate purpose in Jesus Christ.
- The God of purpose has built an inner need for significance into each one of our children.
- Practical Tips for Instilling A Significant Purpose
 - *Children feel significant when they are regularly affirmed.*
 - As parents we need to positively confirm their worth so as to build a solid resistance against the insults and put-downs that often bombard them from our culture.
 - Affirmation catches your children doing things right. It notices when they do things you know don't come easy to them. It applauds them when they fix a wrong or dig themselves out of a hole they've made. I thanks them for living out their moral principles and being willing to stand alone for their convictions.
 - If we view our children as burdens, make statements about how much more difficult they've made our lives, or remind them of how little freedom we have now that they've come along, we're saying, "You lack value. You're not important to me."
 - *Children feel significant when they know they have our attention.* (Ephesians 6:4)
 - It's hard to build a significant purpose into people we aren't paying careful attention to.

- It's our attention to the finer details that tells them how much they truly matter to us. Our gracious God is a God of details. He knows how many hairs are on our heads. He's interested in us because we are fascinating to Him.
 - Children who get the same treatment from their parents—the same treatment that their parents get from God—grow up feeling significant. A deep sense of significance makes it a lot easier for them to live the Grace Life.
- *Children feel significant when they are gracefully admonished.* (Colossians 3:21)
 - Sin presents a clear and present danger to our children in terms of living out the purpose God has saved them for. To manifest his life in their mortal flesh.
 - A Grace Home should possess: 1) clear moral guidelines, 2) graciously administered consequences.
 - Scripturally our children have a bent towards selfishness, and they will no doubt put our moral boundaries to the test. However, the lure of sin can be curbed when parents model a life of grace and admonish their children accordingly.

A Strong Hope

- Anything—minus hope—equals nothing. Hope is the human equivalent to oxygen when it comes to a person's ability to live effectively.
 - Ephesians 2:12
- Without hope it is impossible to live a balanced life. Far worse, without hope, people surrender to sin and die young.
- The plague of today's children is a foreboding sense of hopelessness. It is the logical consequence of a generation of parents who took the permanence out of love and the absolutes out of truth.
 - I Thessalonians 4:13—Paul uses the word hope 41 times in 34 verses in his epistles
 - Romans 5:2-5
 - Romans 15:13
 - I Corinthians 15:19
 - Ephesians 1:18
 - Titus 2:13
- Practical Tips for Instilling a Strong Hope
 - *Children develop a strong hope when they know their parents recognize their talents, strengths, and weaknesses and turn them into assets for their future.*
 - Proverbs 22:6
 - *Children develop a strong hope when their parents allow and encourage them to embrace the Grace Life.*

- Raising safe Christian kids is a receipt for spiritual disaster. Producing shallow faith, kids reared in this fashion will end up either over critical of the world system to the point where they won't want anything to do with lost people or they will become naïve about the world system and become putty in the hands of the adversary.
 - When we raise our kids to be spiritual safe first instead of spiritually strong it speaks volumes about how much faith, hope, and confidence we placed in our own belief system.
- *Children develop a strong hope when their parents help them turn their childhood into a series of positive accomplishments.*
- Unfortunately, parental negligence—whether intentional or unwitting—can set a child up to struggle with hopelessness and feelings of inadequacy for a lifetime.
- Since grace and hope are by products of each other, Grace-based parents have an uncanny way of producing children with strong hope. If our children can't trust the adults in their lives, why should they assume they can trust in a God they can't see.

Concluding Thoughts

- As grace believers we need to guard against turning our belief system in a checklist and our faith into a formula. It is easy to distill beliefs into programs and rituals that substitute for a true intimate knowledge of God and his Word working in us.
- I don't want my children to grow up in a home where they felt that God's pleasure was determined by their behavior. Nor do I want my boys to feel that there is no latitude in how they live out the different nuances of their personalities.
- Strident parenting formulas have a bad habit of using spiritual molds to create look-alike, sound-alike, and act-alike Christian kids.
- Grace-based homes should be known for clear moral boundaries and spiritual expectations. However, they should not be arbitrary boundaries based on unsubstantiated Christian opinion. Rather we should draw our boundaries around the Rightly Divided word and the principals of Grace so that parents as well as kids can make balanced decisions based upon the faith application of truth.
- Grace-based parenting doesn't assume there is some kind of external checklist that can be followed for producing Christ like kids. Grace-based parenting works from the inside out. Fear-based parenting works from the outside in.
- Even grace families utilize many superficial measuring standards of fear-based parenting to betray and sabotage the Grace Life we talk so much about.