

#240 “Bedrocks of Biblical Parenting”

By Brent Barnett

www.relevantbibleteaching.com

Parenting is a difficult, complex, and ever-evolving task as kids change, grow, and as we as parents learn, change, and grow. However, there are some certain constants that impact every parenting decision that we will ever make. Scripture gives us some clear, firm, timeless, and enduring principles that must shape our parenting philosophy and techniques. Specific strategies may come and go, but these truths act as bedrocks that must underpin every conversation, element of discipline, and point of instruction. If we miss these, we will miss the honor of the calling, the privilege of seeing growth, and the full joy of the reward of passing on God’s truth to the next generation.

Principle #1: Children are a gift and a reward. Psalm 127:3 says, “Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.” Kids can tell if we are irritated with them or if we view them as getting in the way of our ability to pursue our life’s ambitions and what we think will make us happy. But they need to see that we take great joy in them and that they are a gift every day, even reminding us of just how good God has been to us. Viewing them as a treasure from above is an essential underpinning for every interaction we have with them, especially on days that are more difficult than others.

Principle #2: Children are a direct investment in the building of the church and the advancement of the gospel. Psalm 127:4 says, “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one’s youth.” Both father and mother must view investing in their children as an investment in the kingdom of God. Leading them to Christ is bringing another into the eternal family of God. Can there really be a higher calling than that? Add to that the fact that we are to train them so that they can, in turn, raise their children to love Christ and to share the gospel with others as well. Children are a critical way through which God has designed for His church to continue forward. Some people have children because they want to raise the next superstar athlete, while others decide to have kids because they are scared of being alone. These selfish motives are not good reasons for having children, and they certainly miss the higher calling of the gospel. Though children do bring great blessing to the hearts of parents as they learn, grow, and worship Christ, the ultimate reason for having children is not for what they can do for us. That self-centered perspective can do irreparable harm as children get confused and feel used and unloved. They need to know how much Christ loves them, and parents need to model that for them.

Principle #3: Children are born with a sin nature. Proverbs 22:15a says, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.” Too many parents gobble up the latest philosophies of the day on child-training rather than the Scripture, and this is a major mistake given that most worldly resources teach that children are born good, not evil. Thus, rather than developing a perspective of molding and shaping the child into righteousness (Psalm 51:5), they try to step back and let the child’s natural ways define him or her. Though often couched in language such as building their self-esteem or allowing for their natural process and creativity, this worldly methodology enables self-centered behavior and teaches the child that he or she is in charge. Rather, children need to learn that there is an a Divine authority Who

decides what is right and wrong, and they need to be taught their boundaries even from very early on. Children look for guidance, and they need to be given it.

Principle #4: Children are in need of discipline and training in the ways of the Lord. Proverbs 22:15b says, “The rod of discipline will remove [foolishness] far from him.” The key word here is not “rod” but “discipline.” Every child will need different forms of discipline at different times, stages, and ages. Just when you think you have a form of consequences, positive or negative, that motivates the child, it seems as though it will stop working. Parents need to be flexible and try to understand why and how their child is responding to various attempts at instruction and discipline. Children have different personalities, different levels of stubbornness, and varying levels of sensitivity and understanding. We must connect to them, explain things fully to them, and empower them to succeed. Disciplinarians don’t understand mercy, while passive parents don’t understand love (Proverbs 13:24). Children need instruction and rebuke, and they need to understand that there are consequences to their actions. However, they must always be able to see their parents as advocates and helpers in their journey toward sanctification. *It shouldn’t be a parent vs. child situation, but rather a parent plus child vs. sin situation. This philosophy must underpin discipline if it is to truly shape a child’s heart and not just modify behavior.*

Principle #5: Children are in need of teaching concerning the ways of the Lord. Deuteronomy 11:19 says, “You shall teach [My words] to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up.” Parents cannot rely solely upon the pastor, the Sunday School teacher, the devotional book, or some kind of Christian-based schooling to teach their kids God’s Word and ways. Ultimately, they must hold themselves accountable for communicating things about God to their children in the everyday matters and activities of life. It is also wise to plan to open up God’s Word and explain Biblical lessons and stories on regular occasions. A Bible lesson before bed can go a long way. As Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Let us remember, however, not to preach at our kids but to teach them. We are, after all, on the journey together under the care of the chief Shepherd.

Principle #6: Parents should imitate Christ and live out what they teach. 3 John 1:11 says, “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.” It is one thing to teach our children through the words we speak, and it is another altogether to model the truth for them. We must imitate Christ for them to make the words sensible and palatable to them. Children need to be told “I’m sorry” when need be, and they need to see true repentance in action. Otherwise, hypocrites will likely beget more little hypocrites.

Principle #7: The home is a place of refuge. Proverbs 14:26 says, “In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge.” The home is not a place for children to be frightened, to be belittled, to be exasperated (Colossians 3:21), or to have to grow up too fast. They should be allowed to be children, to be protected, to be cared for, and to have in their parents those whom they can go to for advice. They should always have an arm to embrace them, a shoulder to cry on, or a person to whom they can showcase their latest creation or exploit. Home is to be a shelter from the corruption of the world and the dangers of evil. It is to be a safe zone, a place of rest and

security. Home can only be a refuge to the extent that the parents make it that way. If parents bicker, don't listen, don't spend time with the kids, or lash out at the kids and never apologize, refuge is the last word the child will think of when describing home.

Parenting is a long-term investment, requiring different elements at different ages, but the end goal of having a son or daughter that grows up to maturity in Christ and that lives out what you have taught them makes it all worth it. What a joy to be able to see them grow up, have children of their own, and pass the truths of our Lord on to another generation. Parents lay the foundation of their child's life, and there is great accountability in that. May we do it humbly, obediently, properly, and according to God's Word by God's grace and power. It won't always be easy, but nothing worthwhile ever is. Invest wisely.