

## Reaching and Keeping our Children

- I. The concern and question
  - A. Many children raised in Christian homes leaving the faith.
  - B. What can we do differently as parents, grandparents, and churches to fortify our families?
- II. The outline of our discussion
  - A. There are two prongs in the salvation and spiritual growth of our children and grandchildren:
    - 1. God the Spirit's work through the Word
      - (1) John 3:6,8; 1 Peter 1:23
      - 2. Our work in "preaching" the message (Romans 10:14), and discipling others (Matt 28:19).
  - B. Salvation is followed by spiritual growth, or sanctification which is accomplished by the Spirit of God through the Word and the cooperation of the person.
  - C. There is no simple three-step plan that's guaranteed to work.
- III. Realities we need to acknowledge
  - A. Salvation is the Holy Spirit's work through the Word
    - 1. Jesus tells us we must be born again by the Spirit, and the Spirit is like the wind in that we see His effects, but we don't know how or when He works (John 3:6, 8).
    - 2. Peter tells us we are born again through the living word of God (1 Peter 1:23).
    - 3. Paul tells us that just as God said, "Let there be light!" at the beginning, He also does that in the human heart (2 Cor 4:6). Thus if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17).
    - 4. All of this is the Spirit's work through the Word of God.
    - 🔑 **5. Therefore, immersion in the Word and faithful teaching is essential.**
  - B. In salvation, the Spirit produces a radical spiritual change at the very core of the person.
    - 1. In the New Covenant, God promises a new heart, stony heart removed, new spirit given, the Holy Spirit given, God causes them to walk in His statutes and keep His judgments, puts the law in minds and hearts, forgives all sins (Ezekiel 36:25-27; Jer 31:33,34).
    - 2. As a result, there is a complete change in motivation. It's the answer to the Psalmist's prayer in Ps 119:36, "Incline my heart to Your testimonies."
    - 🔑 3. Because of this truth, **this work of God cannot be coerced or scheduled or manipulated by human effort.**
    - 4. Emotional responses can look like conversion, but may be only surface changes like the Egyptian magicians duplicating Moses's signs. Satan can counterfeit the real:
      - (1) The parable of the 4 soils and the parable of the tares: Matthew 13
      - (2) Remember, there is a form of godliness while the power is denied (2 Tim 3:5).
    - 5. **Have Hope! We have a Savior who saves! He is able to break through the hardest heart and staunchest resistance in order to accomplish salvation. No one is beyond God's saving mercy!** For the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).
  - C. We understand that God's salvation in Christ is received by believing.
    - 1. Believing means to believe in one's heart that the statements about Jesus Christ – sinless life, death, resurrection for our sins, and His right to rule are true. Romans 10:9-10; John 3:16 and many more.
    - 2. This means there is truth which is to be believed. Which means people, including our children and grandchildren must be exposed to the truth of God correctly and effectively taught. Children need to understand there really is a God and the Bible tells us about Him. This is not fable or myth.

3. There is what we call “easy believe-ism” in which a person thinks he is saved because he agrees with the concept that Jesus lived and is a savior. (See discussion of a disciple below.)
  - (1) Consider the incident in John 8. Jesus spoke to the Jews who believed Him (vs.31). Later in the conversation, He says to the same Jews, “you are of your father the devil.” (vs.44). Clearly, they didn’t “believe” in a saving way.

**🔑 4. Faithful persistent prayer for your family is essential.**

- D. What God starts in a person, He sustains and completes  
(John 10:29; Philippians 1:6; Heb 3:14).
  - E. Growing in grace is a work of the Spirit and the cooperation of the person.
    1. This cooperation comes because of a changed heart.
      - (1) Because the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:14).
      2. This sanctification is also primarily by the Spirit received by faith (Galatians 3:2–3),
      3. But cooperation of the person is required as well as indicated by these two examples of admonition:
        - (1) We are to walk in the Spirit Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:16
        - (2) Grow in grace 2 Peter 3:18
    - F. With those things in mind, we must agree that outward conformity alone is not what we should be looking for.
      1. A person must believe the truth, not just say he believes.
      2. Enforced conformity by parents or others does not necessarily indicate a soul change.
      3. We need to be careful not to presume conversion when there is a profession of faith. True conversion is demonstrated over time.
- 🔑 4. Ongoing spiritual conversations with children or teens will give you a better idea of where they are in their relationship with Christ.**

IV. All of us in the Church need to recapture two major principles: Christians are disciples and there is a war going on.

A. Christians are disciples

1. Disciples were called Christians (Acts 11:26). They were disciples first.
  - (1) Commitment (Matt 7:13-14; Luke 14:26 - 33; Luke 9:62)
  - (2) Followers (Matt 4:19-20; Matt 8:19-22)
  - (3) Learners (Mark 9:31; Luke 11:1; Matt 28:20; Matt 11:29)
  - (4) Becoming like the master (Matt 10:25a; 1 John 2:6)
2. We must understand and teach the Bible accurately (rightly dividing the word of truth 2 Tim 2:15).
  - (1) Comes from personal study and meditation
  - (2) Listening to godly preaching
  - (3) One sermon a week is not enough
3. We’ve all been given the commission of being disciple-makers (Matt 28:19)
  - (1) Make disciples, teaching them all that Jesus taught us. This certainly includes instructing our children in the faith. This is called *catechizing* our children.

**🔑 4. Every Christian should take their personal discipleship and disciple-making seriously.**

B. There is a spiritual war taking place.

1. God of the age has blinded, is seeking to devour
  - (1) (2 Corinthians 4:3–4; 1 Peter 5:8–9)
2. We must not be ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11).
3. Armor – Ephesians 6
4. Prayer

- (1) Romans 12:12 Continuing steadfastly in prayer
- (2) Eph 6:18 Praying in the spirit
- (3) James 5:16 Pray for one another
- (4) Romans 15:30 Striving together in prayer
- (5) Continued vigilance (Colossians 4:2)
- (6) Remember when disciples tried to cast out certain demons, Jesus says this kind only comes out through prayer and fasting (Matt 17:21).
- (7) Weapons not of the flesh and are mighty for pulling down strongholds (2 Cor 10:4-5)
- (8) Pray biblical prayers such as Colossians 1:9-11
- 5. As soldiers we should have these characteristics:
  - (1) Focus on the mission
  - (2) Not entangled 2 Tim 2:4, Paul also mentions the qualities of a good farmer and athlete
  - (3) Keep the armor on
  - (4) Remember, it's not by might but by Spirit of God (Zech 4:6)
- 6. **It's essential that we look at our Christian life as a soldiers, especially when it comes to our role as defenders of our children and grandchildren.**

V. Having laid the groundwork, what are some practical things we can do?

- A. Parents with children at home (Grandparents, you can do or help with some of this as well).
  - 1. **Pray** without ceasing.
  - 2. Develop spiritual goals.
    - (1) Think about what you want your children to know about God and His Word well ahead of their current age.
    - (2) Get help from other godly people, pastors, and teachers.
  - 3. See instructions regarding children and future generations.
    - (1) Deut 6:4-12
      - (a) Make sure **you** love the Lord with your whole being (vs 5).
      - (b) God's Word must be in **your** heart (vs 6).
      - (c) Teach through all the activities of life (vs 7).
      - (d) Make them the core of your personal life and family (vs 8-9).
      - (e) Have scripture signs/plaques throughout the home (vs 9).
      - (f) Don't give your children too much lest they forget the Lord (vs 11-12).
    - (2) Ps 78:1-8
      - (a) Tell your children the glorious deeds of the Lord (vs 1-4).
      - (b) Keep your grandchildren in mind as you teach your children (vs 5-6).
      - (c) Warn them not to be like others who are stubborn or rebellious (vs 8).
    - (3) Ex 13:8; Josh 4:6-7
      - (a) Explain to your children why we live our faith the way we do and what God has done in the past.
  - 4. Bring up in nurture and admonition (Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4)
    - (1) Bring up = nourish; nurture = training; admonition = instruction
  - 5. Worship together with your children. Be an example with open Bible and joining in singing. In Israel, the children were part of the worship gatherings.

6. Teach how to worship, pray, meditate on the word through example and practice. Let them catch you reading and praying.
7. Sing as part of your family worship. Use a hymn book. Sing along with worship videos, etc.
8. Be devoted to the essential practices of the church – doctrine, breaking bread, fellowship, prayer (Acts 2:42).
9. Teach them the value of good Christian books. Teens should begin reading more serious biographies and books to strengthen their Christian life.
10. Remember it's the power of the Spirit, not in your wisdom (1 Cor 2:4).
11. Do not leave these things for your church to do for you.

🔑 **12. Above all, pray.**

B. Grandparents and Parents of adult children

1. You are called to disciple others – that includes adult children and grandchildren.
  - (1) With young children, you can read, tell, and talk about Bible stories.
  - (2) Teach your daughters/granddaughters – Titus 2:4
  - (3) Teach your sons/grandsons – Titus 2:6; 2 Tim 2:2
2. When they are at your house, do your normal family spiritual disciplines: read the Bible or devotional, go over your memory passages, pray as a couple, pray for your meals, etc.

C. Prospective parents – prepare thoroughly by considering the principles in these notes and developing your personal healthy relationship with God through your prayer life, Scripture reading, meditation, and study.

VI. Conclusion

- A. Don't look back and fret about what you haven't done. Begin now where you are and with your own particular circumstances.
- B. Commitment – seek to be consistent as you develop your biblical influence on your family.
  1. Consistency is very important.
  2. Start with bite-sized pieces. God designed the Christian life to be lived in and around the normal course of going to work, doing chores, shopping, playing, etc.

🔑 **C. Understanding of grace – Be sure to understand and practice grace. God's grace is greater than your sins and failures.**

- D. Desire – Ask God for the desire and wisdom that you lack.
- E. Priorities – Work diligently to develop biblical priorities. Seek first the kingdom of God and everything else will take care of itself.
- F. Everything in these notes emphasizes being a devoted, active, worshipping Christian with a healthy spiritually disciplined life and then passing this on to your family through witness and discipleship. **None of us is perfect.** We are all flawed and weak. God's grace is abundant. He just asks us to be faithful.

Rev 3:2 says, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain." Each of us may have lost some ground, but we can strengthen what remains. This in turn will bring back what we have lost.

How I Pray for the Lost

Lord, draw them because you said in your word that no one comes unless the Father draws him.

Lord, open their heart like you did for Lydia so that they would heed your word. Acts 16:14

Lord, as you caused the light to shine in the darkness, would you shine in their heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God to them? 2 Cor 4:6

Lord, please grant them repentance to life as the Christians exclaimed in Acts 11:18.

Please give them the gift of faith which you say is a gift of God so that no one may boast. Eph 2:8.

You have given the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin. Would you do that for my (friend, son, daughter, ...)? John 16:8

Paul said that he was saved "when it pleased God, ... to reveal His Son in me." Would you also be pleased to reveal your Son to \_\_\_\_\_?

Would you reveal to him the beauty of your New Covenant in which you promise us a new heart, new spirit, the Holy Spirit, and motivate us to walk in your ways?

I pray all of these things in the name of Jesus who died for \_\_\_\_\_ just as much as He died for me. Amen!

Excerpts from "Soldiers of Christ Arise"

Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armor on, strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son.

From strength to strength go on, wrestle and fight and pray; tread all the powers of darkness down and win the well-fought day.

Leave no unguarded place, no weakness of the soul; take every virtue, every grace, and fortify the whole.

Rise Up, O Men of God (verse 1)

Rise up, O men of God! Have done with lesser things. Give heart and mind and soul and strength to serve the King of kings.