

RODGERS
BAPTIST
CHURCH
SUNDAY
SCHOOL SERIES

PARENTING BY THE BOOK



Understanding God's design for the family | prepared by Travis Gilbert

To our boys:

LUKE, NOAH, & ETHAN,

your mother and I are blessed and humbled

by the awesome responsibility

of bringing you up in the nurture and admonition

of the Lord.

Proverbs 1:7-9

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	7
THE NURTURE & ADMONITION OF THE LORD	9
A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION	13
YOUR CHILD’S GREATEST NEED	17
TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL	21
GOOD RESOURCES	25
APPENDIX: Let’s Talk about Gender	27

PREFACE

Raising children is at the same time sobering and joyful, a responsibility and a privilege, full of fun and loaded with concern. Think about it, every parent is a sinner who is raising other sinners. Little wonder that the home needs help!

We have help, and it is not found on the day time talk show circuit. Our society is awash with voices that clamor for the family's ear, offering solutions, remedies, and answers for the "modern family." With so much background noise it is essential that parents hone in on the one voice that deserves their attention. God's Word does not leave us in doubt regarding the home. Marriage is defined by the scriptures. The relationship between husband and wife, parents and children, the home and the church are all explained in God's Word; those who have ears to hear just need to listen *and* obey.

The goal of this series of lessons is to orient, or reorient, parents along the path of understanding the home from a Biblical perspective. This is by no means an exhaustive study on parenting and home-life. Instead, it is one that will equip the reader to recognize God's design for the family. Then we must prayerfully and sincerely ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to follow that Biblical pattern, and to follow it joyfully and consistently, in every situation, every day.

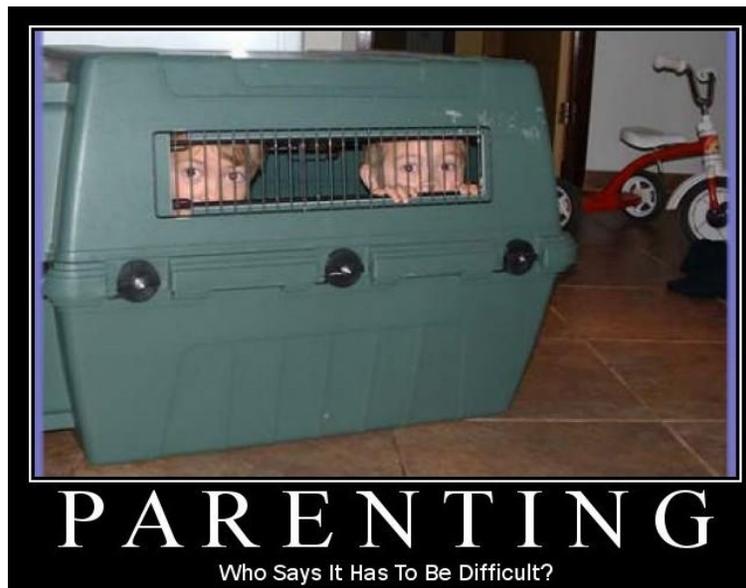
These lessons have been prepared by one who does not consider himself an expert on parenting. The only people who do count themselves as parenting experts are people who have no children of their own! (Or people who don't have a lick of sense.) I am a parent who has messed up more times that I care to recount. But my wife and I desire, pray for, and, by the Holy Spirit's power, work towards building a home according to the Biblical blueprint. There are no tract homes, spiritually speaking; every home is a custom job, but every home must follow the same Biblical design if they want to have a God-honoring and fulfilling home.

Grace and Peace to You!

Travis Gilbert
Garland, TX
October 2011

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Ephesians 6:4



THE NURTURE AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD

Perhaps you can relate, on some levels, to this parent who wrote his pastor the following:

“I’m looking for biblical help with parenting. Not just parenting advice from a Christian perspective, not just warmed-over child psychology couched in "Christian" terminology, but solid, biblical parenting guidelines.

It seems to me that the specific commandments to fathers in the Bible can be written on half a sheet of paper. But I’m sure there are also principles in Scripture that teach parents how to raise their kids. I’m just having a hard time knowing which "principles" are really biblical and which are not. I looked for parenting books in the Christian bookstore. There were lots of choices, but I notice they are peppered with phrases like "your child’s sense of self-worth"; "self-bias impulse drive"; "attention deficit disorder"; and so on. How much of this is truly biblical, and how much is borrowed from secular child psychology? I see very little in these books that actually refers to Scriptures.

My wife and I are barely out of our teenage years, and now we are faced with the responsibility for training up our child in the way that he should go. I don’t feel we are quite ready for the task. Can you recommend some resources that will help us?” (*John MacArthur, What the Bible Says About Parenting, (Word: 2000), p. ix-x*)

Parenting books abound in our society. Beginning with the famous (or infamous depending on your viewpoint) *Baby and Child* by Dr. Spock to more recent volumes such as: the *What to Expect...* series; *Secrets of the Baby Whisperer*; *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children*, etc. There are ample resources, but not all resources are created equal! Our culture does not lack in material or information. Our culture does lack in happy, fulfilled homes.

Which parenting method is the best?

- ✓ *Trial and Error method?*
- ✓ *Not Make My Parents’ Mistakes method?*
- ✓ *Consult the Experts method?*
- ✓ *Parenting by the Book method?*

The last option is the best option, because the ultimate authority on all of life, including parenting, is God’s Word. Another pragmatic program is not needed for successful parenting. The sole requirement for successful parenting is consistent obedience and faithful adherence to biblical principles.

Parenting is not a precise recipe. *“Follow the steps in proper sequence, to the correct amount, and out will pop a God-fearing, church-going, covenant-keeping, gainfully employed and wise young adult.”* Don’t you believe it!

Ephesians 6:4 says, *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* Successful parenting is rearing our children *“in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* How does that look? It looks like parents...

Who are always learning about Jesus...

“The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness.”

- Robert Murray M’Cheyne

While that is true of pastoring, the same goes for parenting. Parents who are *“grow[ing] in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18a) are needed. Parenting by the Book means being able to answer the question: **What are you learning about Jesus?**

Not just intellectual but experiential knowledge. Not just lecturing about Jesus, but living for and by the grace and power of the Lord. When we are parenting by the book we will be able to communicate to our children, not just what but how we are personally learning about Jesus. (Do not be discouraged when you miss a few days here and there.)

Who talk about Jesus with their children...

It is natural to talk about things we have learned, and if we are learning about Jesus we will talk about Him; not just to our lost co-workers but to our children as well. In so doing we follow one of the biblical guidelines for parenting.

“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.”

Deuteronomy 4:9-10

If Jesus affects our everyday lives, then our children will hear about it and see it.

Who don't mind establishing strict boundaries...

Do not be ignorant, "strict boundaries" can become an excuse for parental fear and anger more than parental love and wisdom. What is in mind here is the fact that children are prone to foolishness (Proverbs 22:15), and they do not establish their own boundaries very well. They cannot, because that behavior must be learned. Parents are to teach them, because if parents will not then someone else will. No child has been scarred by strict boundaries that have been lovingly established on the foundation of biblical support; however, many children who live with loose boundaries indulge in sins that have long-term consequences.

Who love in a way that leads toward a friendship...

Pay close attention to the above words. Young and teenaged children do not need their parents to be their "friend." It is a blessing, however, to enjoy a friendship with your maturing children, and to have a mutual, genuine appreciation for one another. Proverbs 27:17 is not restricted to friendships outside the home.

Who understand that there are no guarantees...

Parents who lead their homes by the book may still have wayward children. Remember, there is no formula or recipe to follow that will guarantee desired results. Proverbs 22:6 is a truism, not a promise. God calls us to tend the soil, to provide good conditions for the seed, but He alone gives the increase. Parenting is one of life's greatest, and most rewarding, adventures. Thankfully we have a resource to light the way ahead (Psalm 119:105).

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

Deuteronomy 6:4-7



A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The first sentence of the first chapter in John MacArthur's book *What the Bible Says About Parenting* is a Chinese proverb: "One generation plants the trees and another gets the shade." We enjoy the shade of trees planted by our parents and grandparents. We must ask ourselves: Are we planting trees that will shade our children and grand-children from the oppressive heat of a post-Christian culture, or are we leaving them totally exposed?

That same chapter also includes four foundational principles from scripture on parenting:

1. *Children are a blessing, not a hardship.* Thus, parenthood is a gift from God to us. (Psalm 127) In our cultural climate it is easy to view children as more of a chore than a joy. Raising kids is hard, but it is a delightful duty; not a drudgery.
2. *Parenting is supposed to be a joy, not a burden.* Parenting is not easy, but it does not have to be burdensome. (Proverbs 10:1; 23:24-25; 29:17)
3. *Success in parenting is measured by what the parents do, not by what the child does.* (Joshua 1:7-9)
4. *A child's most important influences come from parents, not peers.* Our children's failures are not our children's friends' fault. Parents must not allow anyone—teachers, coaches, and/or peers—to have more input into their children's lives than they have. (Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:4-7; Joshua 4:20-24; 2 Timothy 1:5)

This fourth principle would seem to be incorrect if one merely followed the current statistics. In her book *The Nurture Assumption*, author Judith Harris cites research data and anecdotal evidence which indicates that kids are more heavily influenced by peer groups than by parents. This leads Harris to flatly state:

"Parenting has been oversold. You have been led to believe that you have more of an influence on your child's personality than you really do." (as quoted in *What the Bible Says About Parenting*, p. 20)

At first glance, Harris may seem right. Many kids *are* more heavily influenced by peers, coaches, teachers, and entertainers than they are by their parents. Yet scripture is clear, parents are to be the primary shapers of their children's lives. What gives? Parents do! They give up their role to others. Our children are a great gift from God. He will hold us accountable for our stewardship of that gift.

Like the church, the family is not only God's idea but His creation. We must understand the Designer's blueprint for the home. We find the schematics in Deuteronomy 5:16 as well as Ephesians 6:1-4. Consider the former first:

“Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

The home is the building block of society. A nation, a culture, a church will be as strong and/or as weak as the individual families that comprise that nation, culture, or church.

As believers we attest to the veracity and authority of scripture, but that conviction must also be demonstrated. The primary place for expression of that conviction is the home. We come to family living, not on the basis of what society tells us, but on the basis of what God’s Word dictates to us. For example:

- *The monogamous relationship between a man and woman*—Genesis 2:24
- *Sin’s impact on all creation; including the family*—Genesis 3
- *The children’s role*—Exodus 21:17; (Matthew 15:3-9)
- *The parents’ role*—1 Samuel 3:13

The authority of scripture has something to say about the family at every point. Are we listening?

What the Bible says about children.

“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.” (Proverbs 23:22) This is not an option, it is an obligation which involves:

- ★ *Love*—(Genesis 46:28-29) the genuine kind, not sentimentalism, not 364 days of disrespect and then a Mother’s Day card .
- ★ *Obedience*—(Luke 2:51-52) the genuine kind, which starts on the inside not the outside. This demands total honesty and a preparedness to suffer the consequences of disobedience.
- ★ *Care and Concern*—that’s continual (Ephesians 6:1-3)

What the Bible says about parents.

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4)

The Greek word translated *“fathers”* is the masculine noun *“pater”* and is translated in Hebrews 11:23 as *“parents.”* This command to not exasperate our children is not solely directed at dads. The translators, however, were wise to use *“fathers”* here, because the father will be ultimately held accountable to God for how he has led his family. Biblical leadership is about responsibility.

“Provoke not your children to wrath...” God calls parents to not exasperate their children. Here are eight exasperators:

1. Failing to allow them to be children
2. Treating them with harshness and cruelty
3. Ridiculing them in front of others
4. Displaying favoritism/making comparisons
5. Failing to express approval
6. Being arbitrary in discipline/lacking consistency
7. Neglecting them/making them feel like intruders
8. Seeking to achieve our goals through their lives

The above is what not to do. Here is what to do *“...bring them up...”*

- ✓ *Cherish them fondly*
- ✓ *Rear them tenderly*
- ✓ *Sustain them spiritually*
- ✓ *Deal with them individually*

This bringing up is to be done *“...in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* Nurture and admonition have to do with discipline and instruction respectively. *“Nurture”* is what we **do** (Hebrews 12:1-11; Proverbs 13:24; 22:15). *“Admonition”* is what we **say**.

Remember, we will be held accountable, not for the response of our children, but for the instruction of our children. We must instruct them in such a way as to show our children that behind us stands the Lord. He is the ultimate Instructor. When it is all said and done, the privilege, the honor, and duty which is ours is to seek to be able to bring the hearts of our children to the heart of the Savior.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Romans 12:1-2



YOUR CHILD'S GREATEST NEED

Our children have many needs. Of course they do! Their neediness is by design. Children are brought into this world in need of everything: protection, nurture, care, education, and so much more. As parents, our biblical goal is to raise our children from absolute dependence on us for every need, to independence from us for most of their needs. What is your child's greatest need?

Before you answer, consider that the goal of this series is to understand what the Bible says about parenting, and what the Bible says about parenting is not complicated. Parenting is joyfully difficult, but it is not complex; *unless we make it so*. There is no biblical method for feeding infants or potty training toddlers. The Bible does not dictate when curfew should be, whether or not you should be a "courtship" or a dating family; a homeschool, public, or private school family. The Bible is silent about whether or not your children should be rocked to sleep, given pacifiers, or allowed to eat candy and have soft drinks. Still, many Christian parenting books outline "biblical" methods for all the above and more. Now, consider again the question: What is your child's greatest need? ***Our children's greatest need is to be saved!*** Why is that their greatest need?

Like father, like sons and daughters

God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27; 9:6). This is not a physical resemblance but a spiritual one. Man is capable of embodying God's communicable attributes, and is able to reason, as well as having an intellect, will, and emotion. Man—this means all of us, including our children—is a sinner. We are not sinners because God created us as such, but because Adam's fall affected the entire human race. My children are sinners because I am a sinner, my parents were sinners, their parents were sinners, all the way back to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8; 5:3; 6:5; Romans 5:12, 18-19). We all bear the stamp of sin. Sin is not a learned behavior; it is our nature. Sin is not just what we do; it is who we are. Charles Swindoll cites a sobering statement from the Minnesota Crime Commission:

"Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it—his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmates' toy, his uncle's watch. Deny him these once, and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness, which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He is, in fact, dirty. He has no morals, no knowledge, no skills. This means that all children—not just certain children—are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in the self-centered world of his infancy, given free reign to his impulsive actions to satisfy his wants, every child would grow up a criminal." (Growing Deep in the Christian Life, (Zondervan: 1995), p. 212)

Children do not go bad because of something their parents have done or failed to do. Children go bad because they were born bad. This is why our children's greatest need is that they be saved from their sin and the penalty it carries. No matter how well-adjusted, responsible, financially and professionally successful they may become, if they have not been saved they are in great need.

This—our indwelling sin nature—is why the answer to our children's greatest need **is not...**

→ *Behaviorism*

→ *Isolationism*

→ *Self-esteem*

Of course parents are to care for and provide for their children physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally, but if our children are not spiritually instructed their upbringing will be lacking. *Not just any spiritual instruction will do!* Again, we turn our gaze to Deuteronomy, this time 6:4-7. Moses calls for parents to provide for their children...

Explanations borne of their experiences.

The context of this passage is the experience of the Exodus from Egypt. God used the Ten Plagues to demonstrate His sovereign power, and to emancipate His people. The tenth plague reinforced the teaching that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22). The Passover was instituted at that time. Every house that was covered by the blood of the sacrificial lamb was passed over by the Angel of Death (Exodus 12:12-14).

The Exodus from Egypt foreshadowed our emancipation from the bondage of sin by the shed blood of the Lamb. Therefore, the experiences which we are to explain to our children are not just yarns about the "good ole days." Instead, we explain our experience in the lineage of God's grace and goodness. We explain the wonder of His redemption:

✓ *The fact that He purchased us—"We were once slaves in Egypt."*

✓ *How He purchased us—"The shed blood of a lamb was applied to the house."*

✓ *And the difference it makes to be redeemed by the King—"He freed us from our slavery and delivered us into the Promised Land."*

We provide for our children explanations of our own experience **that are borne out of God's Word and truth**. Without that we have nothing to say. Without that we can introduce our children to religion as a system, but we cannot introduce them to Jesus as a friend and savior. We cannot offer to our children Living Water from which we have not drunk.

Hope that is held in your heart.

Children can detect very quickly the distinction between a heart beat and a hollow routine. Our children know our hearts because they hear our words (Matthew 12:34), because they see how we spend our money (Luke 12:34), they see where we spend our time. They see how we worship; whether it is in spirit and truth with all our might, or not. They see whether or not we are sincerely committed to Christ and His church.

- ✓ Is *"Say your prayers"* simply a routine, or is it an expression of a heart's longing for God?
- ✓ Is *"Read your Bible"* simply a tedious habit, or is it an articulation of a heart's yearning for God?

Moses calls for parents to provide for their children explanations borne from experience, a hope that is held in the heart, and a...

Pattern that is clearly prescribed.

We are called to diligently teach our children these things, or, stated another way, to impress these things on our children. We are not called to impress our children, but to impress the things of God on our children. Stamp them with the commandments of God! Yes, I am saying, based on the strength of scripture, that we are to *indoctrinate* our young ones, and we are to indoctrinate them in the things of God.

Our children are not a shrine at which we worship. Instead, our children are gifts from the Lord. We have been given them to nurture them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. We are to raise them from total dependence on us, to independence from us and total dependence on God. We have been given them to prepare them for eternity.

Are we prepared to offer our children to God? We cannot offer them, if we have not first offered ourselves.

“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.”

Deuteronomy 4:9-10



TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL

Have you ever been so frustrated with your children that you find yourself thinkg (or even saying), “How do I know what to do with them? They didn’t come with instructions!” The Bible says otherwise! The Bible provides all the instruction parents need for the raising of their children. The issue is not an absence of instructions, but whether or not those instructions are being understood and applied.

We are able to teach our children well, and the book of Proverbs is an invaluable resource toward that end. Proverbs is Christianity in working clothes, providing Godly wisdom for every aspect of our lives.

Wisdom Begins at Home—*Proverbs 1:7-9*

In their book *Moments Together for Parents*, Dennis and Barbara Rainey quote Charles Swindoll:

“Whatever else may be said about the home, it is the bottom line of life. The anvil upon which attitudes and convictions are hammered out. It’s the place where life’s bills come due, the single most influential force in our earthly existence...It is at home, among family members, that we come to terms with circumstances. It is here life makes up its mind.” (p. 14, quoting *Home Is Where Life Makes Up Its Mind*, Charles Swindoll)

Parents are to teach their children, and they are to teach their children in every context (Deuteronomy 6:7): victory, defeat, joyfulness, pain, friendship, betrayal, etc. Since wisdom begins in the home, parents need to understand that their children come with a label which reads: *Yours for a limited time only*. Time is a limited commodity, and time with your children is even more restricted. While it is possible to begin the task too late, it is impossible to begin too soon. By nature, we love our children dearly, but we need the scriptures to love them wisely. This is why we must train up a child in the way he should go, and use the rod of correction to drive from him the foolishness that is bound up in his heart.

Wisdom begins at home. The parents are the teachers. The children are the pupils. Life is the classroom. What do we teach them? It’s not what Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young suggested: “feed them on your dreams, the one they pick, the one they’ll go by.” That’s not sufficient. Instead, we teach them the Bible. What does the Bible teach? It teaches them a worldview that answers the questions of who they are and from where they have come. That we are sinners. That we require a Savior. That Jesus is that Savior. That in our place condemned He stood, so that we might be saved by turning from our sin and turning to Him.

The real key to raising children is theology! Because only a sound theology will enable us to train up a child in the way he *should go*, instead of the way he *would go*. Do not miss the distinction! Since foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child, the way he would go is not the way he should go. He will never go the way he should unless his parents teach him. To leave children without principles, is not to make them free, it is to render them helpless. Here are ten principles from Proverbs that parents should teach their children. (See *What the Bible Says About Parenting*, pp. 77-104).

1. **Teach your children to fear the Lord** - *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."* (9:10; 1:7) This is the foundational principle upon which everything which follows is built. (14:26-27)
2. **Teach your children to guard their minds** - *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."* (4:23) *"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he"* (23:7a) (Mark 7:20-22) Outward conformity is not the primary goal. Internal change which leads to outward conformity is the aim.
3. **Teach your children to obey you** - *"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law."* (4:1-4; 6:20-23; Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2-3) Correction must be consistent, biblical, and righteously administered for it to be effective.
4. **Teach your children to wisely choose their friends** - *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."* (13:20; 1:10-18; 2:10-15; 1 Corinthians 15:33)
5. **Teach your children to control/direct their desires** - *"Flee...youthful lusts"* (2 Timothy 2:22; Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:3-5; 7:6-27; James 1:14-15) Lust is not restricted to fornication. To lust is to desire. We must teach our children to not only run away from sinful desires, but to not desire good things too much, and to be filled with a desire for God. (Psalm 42:1; 119:131; Isaiah 26:9; 1 Peter 2:2)
6. **Teach your children to enjoy their spouses** - *"Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well...Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth."* (5:15-20; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-9)
7. **Teach your children to watch their words** - *"Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee."* (4:24; 10:11, 19-21, 32; 12:18, 22; 15:7; 16:23; 20:15; Luke 6:45; James 3:2-13) Teach them that their tongue is a rattle tale on their heart. We cannot see another person's heart, but stick around long enough and we will hear it.

8. **Teach your children to pursue their work** - *“He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.”* (10:4-5; 6:6-11; 22:29; Colossians 3:22-25; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15) Teach your children to work hard; not just when you are standing over them but at all times.
9. **Teach your children to manage their money** - *“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”* (3:9-10; 6:1-5; 11:24-26, 28; 15:27; 19:17; 22:9, 16; 23:4; Matthew 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:6-10)
10. **Teach your children to love their neighbors** - *“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do [it]. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.”* (3:27-29; Leviticus 19:18; Luke 10:25-37)

There is a way that seems right to our children; however, that way is the broad road which leads to destruction; its end is the way to death (Proverbs 14:12; Matthew 7:13). So we point them to Christ. We demonstrate before them that we are walking with Jesus. While we cannot force them to trust and follow Him, we certainly teach them that is the way they should go, and that the alternative is ruination.

At this point, an old cliché must be trotted out and clearly understood. Here it is: **Truth is caught more than taught.** What does that mean? Is this a suggestion that truth may be absorbed through a mechanism other than teaching? No doubt, some people use the cliché in that way. I agree with the statement, but only to a point. The point being this, not all teaching is didactic, but all instruction is learned. We teach with our mouths—didactically—but we must also demonstrate with our lives the very instruction we teach. All behavior is learned; even that which is caught. Class is **always** in session; not just when you sit your kids down to lecture them. The words you speak, your body language, the manner in which you relate to others, how you treat your spouse, your handling of stress...with every situation and in every moment we are teaching our children. They will catch it. We must make sure that the *it* is God-honoring.

Teach your children well. Teach them the Bible, and as you are living what you teach, they will catch it as well as hear it.

GOOD RESOURCES

Lasting Love: How to Avoid Marital Failure by Alistair Begg. Moody Press, 1997.

Love & Respect by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. Thomas Nelson, 2004

Solving Marriage Problems: Biblical Solutions for Christian Counselors by Jay Adams. Zondervan, 1983

Heaven Help the Home by Howard Hendricks. Victor Books, 1990 (originally written in 1973)

What the Bible Says About Parenting by John MacArthur. Word, 2000

The Fulfilled Family by John MacArthur. Nelson Books, 2005

Divine Design by John MacArthur. Victor, 2006 (originally published in 1994)

What's the Difference? Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible by John Piper. Crossway, 1990.

The Beams of Our House by Dr. Wayne Hudson. Self-published, 2003

The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment by Tim Challies. Crossway, 2007

Disciplines of a Godly Family by Kent and Barbara Hughes. Crossway, 2007 (originally published 1995)

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald Whitney. NavPress, 1991

The Discipline of Grace by Jerry Bridges. NavPress 2006

www.ccef.org – the website for the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation. There is a lot of helpful information and resources here, and not just for family issues

<http://www.pluggedin.com> – Focus on the Family's immensely useful website of pop culture entertainment reviews from a Christian perspective

APPENDIX – “Let’s talk about Gender”¹

“Can you ask me that question again?”

That is what the theology professor asked his student. The professor had just finished a lecture on the pastorate; specifically who is qualified for the pastorate, and even more specifically that only men may be called by God to the pastorate. At the end of the lecture, this pastoral studies seminary student raised his hand and asked, “Now, what if you have a man who is lost, who gets a sex change operation and becomes a woman. Then “she” gets saved, and then “she’s” called to preach. Can “she” serve as a pastor, or can “she”, after “she” has had the reverse sex change operation and is now a man again; can *he* now serve as a pastor of a local church?”²

“Can you ask me that question again?”

Now we all know that there is nothing new under the sun, but no previous generation of Christians has ever had to answer that question! Solomon may have dealt with harlots arguing over maternity rights, but he never had to grapple with whether or not one of the harlots had, before the operation, fathered the child.

Let’s think about the concerned student’s question. After you work past the initial shock factor of the inquiry, and the obligatory nausea that accompanies such thoughts; you realize that this student *is assuming that a man can become a woman*. Inherent to his question is an underlying assumption that a male can become a female and vice versa. This young man, who is preparing for the pastorate, has unwillingly caved to a cultural consensus which states that the differences between male and female are strictly aesthetic.

You would be wrong to believe that this is an isolated incident, or that this viewpoint is restricted to secular opinion. Many who would identify themselves as Christian would hold to the same view. To be sure, *many* would be repulsed at the idea of a sex-change operation, and *many* would affirm that Paul was not off base when he wrote that women are not permitted to pastor (I said *many* – not *all*). Once you get past that, however, most Christians answer the question: “What’s the difference between a man and a woman?” with the lame response of “plumbing and hormones”. In this society, where plumbing can be re-arranged, hormones can

¹ This was a lecture I gave in October 2007 at the Dearborn Baptist Church *Faithful Men* conference. It may, at first, seem out of place in a lesson series on parenting, but today’s kids are being raised in an environment that is seemingly clueless (purposefully clueless may be a better description) about an issue as basic as gender identity. Our children need to be instructed by us from the scriptures on this issue. Hopefully, this resource will help.

² Dr. Russell Moore “[Gender & the Future of a Counter-Cultural Church](#)” MP3 audio 4:20 – 6:05

be supplemented, and homosexuality is being normalized, that is a dangerous, confusing, inadequate, and unbiblical answer.

Isn't it amazing that gender, the most basic aspect of our humanity, has become such a confusing issue? Just pick up a paper (or scan your news feed) and you'll come across stories that use phrases such as: "transgender", "unisex", "gender transition", "gender expression", "gender dysphoria"³, "gender fluidity", and, my personal favorite, the politically incorrect "gender benders". Last week I read an article from the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* entitled "Transgender community works to gain protections in South Florida". Although this is not a laughing matter, I could not help myself when I read the article's first sentence: "Transgender is quietly becoming a protected class in South Florida as cities vote to prohibit discrimination against a group that *faces challenges fitting in.*"⁴ (Emphasis mine) It is a bit awkward when "Joe" goes on vacation and returns as "Josephine"!

That type of news story is becoming more and more prevalent, and you can find them across a broad spectrum of media outlets. In the July 9 issue of *Sports Illustrated*, editorialist Rick Reilly wrote about running into former colleague Mike Penner who he did not, at first, recognize. That is perfectly understandable since Mike Penner is now Christine Daniels. Reilly goes on to wonder why he couldn't see it coming, and if he can deal with the fact that his old/new buddy is now a "decent-looking babe".⁵

These references establish the fact that, in our culture, gender identity has become confused. This confusion is not restricted to gender identity; it also encompasses gender roles, and this confusion is not isolated to the culture but has infiltrated our churches. Therefore, my purpose this morning is to serve you by asking and answering three questions:

³ Dr. Mohler's 10/18/06 blog post "[Gender Confusion in the Kindergarten?](#)" – Mohler quotes a distressing article from the *Miami Herald* about a "transgendered" 5-year old kindergartener. Mohler quotes the article as follows: *One little girl entering Broward County kindergarten this fall is actually a boy. Few will know this genetic truth, because the 5-year-old's parents and school administrators have agreed that it's in his best interest to blend in as a female. Mental health professionals have diagnosed Pat -- not his real name -- with gender dysphoria, a condition in which a person believes that he or she is the opposite gender. After two years of examination, they have determined that he is not simply effeminate or going through a phase. The soon-to-be kindergartner looks quite feminine, cart-wheeling around the yard and playing with dolls. Pat says he hates his penis, and he refuses to wear boys' clothing. He and his three older siblings -- two girls and a boy -- live in a middle-class Broward County neighborhood with their father, an attorney, and their mother, who has a master's degree in counseling. Pat's parents had never heard of gender dysphoria until they took their child for treatment. He was insisting that he was a girl, and often tried to hide his penis between his legs.*

⁴ 9/24/07 article by Patty Pensa in the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com*, "Transgender Community Works to Gain Protections in South Florida"

⁵ *Sports Illustrated* July 9, 2007 issue, "Extreme Makeover" by Rick Reilly

- 1) Are there *functional* or only *physical* differences between a man and a woman?
- 2) If there are functional differences between a man and a woman, **does that mean that men and women are not equal?**
- 3) **Why does this matter to me and my church?**

Let's look for answers in the scriptures, in particular **Galatians 3:26-29**.

²⁶For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.** ²⁹And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Emphasis mine)

Before we go any further, I think it is important for us to understand that within Christendom (and I believe within our churches) there exists a debate over gender roles. The opposing positions are the *complementarian* and the *egalitarian* view of gender roles in the home and the church. Here are their definitions.

- ▶ **Complementarians** believe that men and women are created in the image of God; equal in their essential dignity and personhood. By God's good and glorious design men and women have distinct, complementary roles in the home and the church. God has assigned to husbands self-sacrificial leadership in the home, and wives a joyful and respectful embrace of that leadership. God has also called qualified men to the burden and responsibility of self-denying leadership in the church, and the entire congregation to respect and submit to their leadership.
- ▶ **Egalitarians** believe that God created men and women equal in all respects, and that no functional distinction exists, only physical distinctions. Male and female roles and functions are interchangeable both in the home and in the church. Male hierarchy in the home and church is a result of the Fall.

Basically egalitarians are Christian feminists. The most vocal proponents of egalitarianism cite our text, especially **v. 28**, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*"; as the primary proof text for their position.

For instance, the web pages of [Christians for Biblical Equality states](#) that CBE is an organization of Christians "who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women of all ethnicities and all economic classes, based on the teachings of scripture as reflected in Galatians 3:28." Rebecca Groothuis, in her 1997 book *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*, writes, "Of all the texts that support biblical

equality, Galatians 3:26-28 is probably the most important.” David Scholer, professor of NT at Fuller Theological Seminary has written that Galatians 3:28 is “the fundamental Pauline theological basis for the inclusion of women and men as equal and mutual partners in all of the ministries of the church.”⁶

Did Paul use Galatians 3:28 to teach the negation of gender specific roles? Is Paul teaching that there exists no distinct, functional difference between men and women?

The answer is “No!” The reason is simple. Galatians 3:28 is not a proverbial statement about gender roles. In fact, it is not about gender roles at all. This verse, as with all passages of scripture, must be interpreted *in its context*. The *only way* one can argue that “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” is “the fundamental Pauline theological basis for the inclusion of women and men as equal and mutual partners in all of the ministries of the church” ***is by ripping it from its context!***

The context of Galatians 3:28 makes abundantly clear that ***in Christ*** men and women are:

- † *Equally justified by faith (v. 24)*
- † *Equally free from the bondage of legalism (v. 25)*
- † *Equally children of God (v. 26)*
- † *Equally clothed with Christ (v. 27)*
- † *Equally possessed by Christ (v. 29)*
- † *Equally heirs of the promise given to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ (v. 29)*⁷

All believers are justified and blessed with Abraham in Christ. We become heirs of the promise of God when we are in Christ, and that is by grace through faith; not law or works. Galatians 3:28 does not abolish gender-based roles established by God and redeemed by Christ. The issue isn’t even addressed!

Instead, the believer’s identity and inheritance in Christ is addressed. Therefore, a believer will receive everything that Jesus receives, and that applies to Jews, Greeks, freemen, slaves, men, and women! This means that any sense of pride and superiority or jealousy and inferiority

⁶ These three examples are as cited by Richard W. Hove, *Equality in Christ? Galatians 3:28 and the Gender Dispute* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1999), 16-17.

⁷ *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), 71-72 - as quoted by Richard W. Hove, *ibid.*, 18.

should not exist between these groups that viewed themselves as so distinct in the ancient world. Jews should no longer think themselves superior to Greeks, freemen should not think themselves superior to slaves, and men should no longer think themselves superior to women. They are all in Christ, and all share an equal value and dignity in Christ.

Truly, men and women are equal in essence. *“There is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ”* **does** communicate that men and women are equally loved; equally valued; equally gifted; equally called to minister in and through the church. *“There is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ”* **does not mean** that we are *no longer* male or female. It means that we are united in Christ. It means that we should never be boastful or arrogant against others. It means that we should never feel inferior or without value in our churches. But the verse does not teach that men and women are the same, or that men and women serve the same roles and function in the home and in the church.

Now a Christian feminist would argue that for there to be *equality* there must also be *interchangeability* of roles and function. In other words, for me to say that men and women are “equal in Christ” then turn around and say “but men have leadership in the home and women cannot serve as pastors” is, according to an egalitarian, double-talk.

I think it’s Bible-talk!

The Bible clearly and consistently teaches the *distinction of roles* along with the *equality of essence*. A key passage of this teaching is **1 Peter 3:7**, *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”* Peter teaches us that a man’s wife (and this does not preclude single women – no superiority or inferiority) is an heir with her husband, is equal with her husband in salvation. He also says that she is the weaker vessel for whom the husband is to protect and provide. In one verse we see difference in roles but equality of worth.

So what?! That is the question that we have to answer; it is always the question that must be answered. That is what your congregation is asking every time we preach. “So what? What does this mean for how I am to live? How does this impact my family? What does this mean for the ministries of our church?”

When men and women live and work together in complementarity in the home and in the church, there is nothing more beautiful, satisfying, delightful, and God-glorifying. Equality of essence, distinction in roles and function, male headship in the home and church; these are truths to be lived and celebrated. These are not truths which should be ignored, nor are they truths for which we owe an apology.

Here is why this issue is so important, and why we must *understand, teach, and practice* Biblical manhood and womanhood.⁸

Because Men and Women are Different

“In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 5:1-2; cf. 1:26-27). Our God is one, yet He eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our one triune God is both *equal* and *distinct*. Without living out the God-given distinction of male and female, relating to one another as God intended for us to relate, we cannot give adequate expression to this aspect of what it means to be created in the image of God. We were not created as androgynous beings, nor were we created with a mistaken gender identity. The differences between man and woman are intrinsic and God-designed. The differences are meant to be understood and embraced for our good and God’s glory.

There is much by way of Christian discipleship which is applicable to both men and women, but there is much that is unique. There is a reason why Paul instructed the mature women (not Titus) to teach the younger women *“to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:3-5).* As pastors we must recognize and account for this.

Because Scripture Speaks to this Issue Consistently & Clearly

If the Bible consistently and clearly speaks about manhood and womanhood, so must we! It is important to remember, not only with this doctrine but with all doctrine that we teach with *clarity* and *charity*. If your teaching is clear but uncharitable, then you are dropping the ball and harming the gospel. If your teaching is charitable but not clear or wrong, then you are dropping the ball and harming the gospel.

Gender roles, male headship, these things are not just theoretical issues that have no bearing on the church’s message and ministry. We’re not just talking about who can or cannot be ordained or teach a certain Sunday school class. The issue of Biblical manhood and womanhood is related to how we view God, the gospel, the home, the church, and discipleship. For instance, in **Ephesians 5**, **1 Timothy 3**, and **1 Corinthians 11 & 14** Paul places the distinction of male/female roles and function as the *norm* for all Christian marriages, for church leadership, and for church worship. I find it interesting that Paul lists only one core competency in the qualifications of a pastor, and this is *“apt to teach”*. The rest are character qualifications and family leadership qualifications. The God-given, Word-based requirement for healthy

⁸ The following 4 points are taken from Ligon Duncan’s address at the [Different by Design Conference ’07](#).

Christianity and church life is, not just related to but rooted in Biblical manhood and womanhood. This is not a peripheral issue!

Because when this Teaching is Denied, Altered, or Unpracticed the Results are Disastrous for Families and Churches

Many marriages suffer continual tension or disenchantment because the husband and wife have not had clear, consistent, charitable Biblical teaching and modeling of what marriage fundamentally is, and the appropriate role relationships within marriage.

We've all heard the tired joke that "God made Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve." But are we doing a good job in explaining what that means *beyond the obvious?! Certainly, everyone in this room is against same-sex marriages, but I fear that many of our church couples are in same-sex marriages without ever realizing it!*

Servant leadership, which is what men are called to both in the home and in the church, is not a "fuzzy term". I think we take great pains, at least I do, to reinforce that servant leadership is not a dictatorship. Wives and churches are not to be the de facto serfs of husbands and pastors. Servant leadership does not mean dictatorship, but neither does it mean "no leadership".

⁹Male headship is strictly defined in Scripture as the opposite of a grasp for power. The headship of men in the church and home is rooted everywhere in Scripture in protection and provision. This is why the apostle Paul calls the man who will not provide for his family "*worse than an infidel*" (**1 Timothy 5:8**). As I've already mentioned, the apostle Peter calls on husbands to recognize both that the woman is the "*weaker vessel*" and that she is an "*heir together of the grace of life*" with her husband (**1 Peter 3:7**). Ephesians 5 defines male headship as a man giving up his own wants in order to care for his wife as his own body.

A man who would see such headship as a warrant to abuse is not simply confused. He is a blasphemer who does not grasp the gospel itself. An abusive man is no more representing biblical male headship than a father who gives his child a snake when he asks for a fish is representing the fatherhood of God. (Luke 11:5-13).

Male headship is not represented by violent men, but by men whose aggression is directed toward subduing their own fallen wills in order to protect and provide for their wife and children. This headship is not about raw sovereignty but covenant responsibility.

⁹ The following is from Russell Moore's editorial "O.J. Simpson Is Not a Complementarian" from the Spring 2007 *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*

Because Biblical Authority is at Issue

Ultimately this issue is one of Biblical authority. Will we allow the culture to shape our thinking and theology, or will we follow God's good and glorious design for men and women in the home and in the church? As Christians and as churches we are to engage and shape (light & salt) the culture, not ape it or copy it. "It is not the business of the church to conform Christ to men but men to Christ."¹⁰

The issue of complementarianism and egalitarianism is increasingly acting as the watershed distinguishing those who will accommodate Scripture to culture, and those who will attempt to shape culture by Scripture. When the authority of Scripture is undermined, the gospel will not long be acknowledged.¹¹

¹⁰ Dorothy Sayers as quoted by Ligon Duncan at *Different by Design* '07

¹¹ "[Undermining Tolerance of Egalitarianism](#)" blogpost by Mark Dever on the *Together for the Gospel* blog.