

## **Discipleship: The Heart of Parenting**

### **Part III – ‘Relationship’**

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*“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” 1 John 3:1,2*

How would you rate your relationship with your teen or soon-to-be teen? Is it good? Is it up and down, seemingly out of your control and primarily in their hands? Do you find your attempts at growing your relationship with them sometimes successful, but not consistently? Are some of your children easier to relate with than others? These are common issues all parents can relate to when it comes to parent and teen relationships.

The relationship we have as parents with our children must always be seen through the lens of our primary relationship with God our Father. Our relationship with God as our Father provides both parental example and access to immeasurable power. God our Father has done more than only show the divine relationship of a parent to a child, he empowers us through Christ to live for him even when it comes to parenting.

The power to be parent doesn't come through experience, or good family history, but through the power we have as children of God. As a Christian parent, we have 'Christ in us the hope of glory' (Col 1:27). We have been equipped to fulfill the role that God has called us to. Through his Word and prayer, we can receive needed wisdom and discernment; and we have Christ our advocate to ever intercede for us.

We must begin here, or we will be tempted to 'walk by sight and not by faith' when it comes to our relationship with our teenagers. We can measure our relationship by the last encounter. If good, then all is well, if not so good, then we can define the overall relationship that way. Our faith that God will lead us, as we lead them into the inexperienced teenage years, must be unshakable.

The parent is the most important relationship a young person has. It is God-given and God-empowered. We must reject the sense that we can only endure the coming years, and embrace the fact that every parent has been chosen by God to be 'instruments in the Redeemer's hand' in raising our children to be adults.

This morning let us continue to review our discipleship, and focus on relationship – reviewing our affection, our activity, our availability, and our authority. Then we will look at how to get help and helping others in this area of relationship with our teenagers.

## **I. Our Affection**

- A. The unconditional love that we have experienced from our heavenly Father needs to be the love we express to our children. This tangibly expresses the gospel to them.
  - 1. “Do you remember what it was like to be a teenager? Do you remember your self-consciousness, your physical awareness, and your general confusion? Do you remember feeling great about yourself one day and wanting to die the next? Do you remember trying to be cool, only to make a complete fool of yourself? Do you remember doing immature and irresponsible things just at the time that you were trying to win your parents’ respect? Effective parents of teenagers are people who are able to remember what it was like to live in the scary world of the teen years.” Paul David Tripp
- B. Here is a question - ‘Do I enjoy being with my child?’ Our relationships with our pre-teens begin with the ‘work’ it sometimes takes to enjoy them. It is work at times, but it is preparing us to ‘*walk in the light*’ with them through what lies ahead of us.
  - 1. We must begin at the point where we also always see our children as gifts from God to us. There can come times where we are just not sure, and would want to maybe give one away...well, that is the time to realize that our attitude towards them is easy for them to see and understand. In light of the gospel we see that as Christ has unconditionally accepted us, we should always allow our children to see and feel our unconditional acceptance of them.
- C. Your affection for them should be evident both publically and privately. The expression of that affection can change but their awareness of it should not change.

## **II. Our Activity**

- A. Do you pursue your pre-teen? It is vital because teens will often not pursue you.
  - 1. “Enter the world of your pre-teenager and stay there. Don’t ever let them view you as being outside of their functional world. Teenagers will reject grenades of wisdom and correction lobbed from afar by someone who has not been on site for quite awhile.” Paul Tripp
- B. What are important activities to them? What do they enjoy? Find out what it is and engage in it with them. What are important activities to you? Can you allow them to be a part?

### **III. Our Availability**

- A. This goes back to our question, ‘Do we enjoy being with our kids?’ If we don’t, we will find reasons to not be together with them. Our availability will become minimal or compromised over time.
- B. Our priorities, expressed in our time, need to reflect the love for our children that is in our hearts. When they see your love expressed in time, it will become a reality for them that cannot be ignored.
- C. Our availability to our children must be a priority. Time is a commodity that is finite, and the demands of our current society leaves little time unaccounted for during the day. Review your priorities by reviewing where you spend your time.

### **IV. Our Authority**

- A. Our authority is given by God to be exercised in our homes. For our authority to be expressed effectively, we must ensure that it springs from genuine biblical conviction, communicated out of love, having your focus be the care of their souls. Because...
  - 1. Teenagers can be defensive; they often take our loving concern and parental help as an accusation of failure. Be prepared for the ‘courtroom,’ and maintain your goal to keep the focus on your concern and their heart, not to engage in defensive arguments. Remember to come with honest questions, not accusations from foregone conclusions.
  - 2. Teenagers can shift blame
    - a) ...Not my fault
    - b) ...I didn’t hear you
    - c) ...I didn’t know that is what you meant
    - d) ...You did not give me enough time
  - 3. Teenagers can often not listen
    - a) They have short attention spans, keep the conversation interesting and to the point.
    - b) Make these moments interactive, not just another lecture...seen from their perspective.

c) “When you try and talk with your teenager, it is not just you and he (or she) in the room alone hoping that somehow, some way you would be able to get along with one another. The glory of God has been given as a gift to you so that you would be able to be a humble, gentle, patient, and forbearing instrument of the love and unity God has planned for his people. His gift of glory is your hope of unity.” Paul Tripp

B. With your discipleship and love for them, correction becomes a part of life. As they are now no longer children, but quickly becoming young adults, how do you approach your pre-teen with correction? Here are some thoughts:

1. Guard against taking the actions of your children personally, they are sinners too. Their actions are a reflection of their own hearts; try not to make it a reflection of you.
2. Bring correction to them out of genuine concern for their souls, not out of embarrassment, inconvenience, or frustration.
3. Remember, the heart is the focus. They will do foolish things that need addressing, but correction is directed at the yielding to sinful desires and motives of the heart.
4. Wait for the right time.
5. Understand sin issues vs. wisdom issues.
6. Increasingly make room for your teenager’s differing style and manner; hold correction for moral and ethical failures. However, any style needs to be modest and absent of rebellious motivation.
7. For important issues, do some planning for an undistracted time to bring it to them. (during a drive, for instance)
8. Always look to bring encouragement of what the Holy Spirit is doing in their lives
9. Guard from using abusive, berating speech
10. Allow room for discussion, even disagreement (not defensive argument, but discussion and appeal).
11. Finally, always begin with your own heart...‘Do I see my log, and do I deal with my log first?’ (Matthew 7:1-5). Have your children seen you confess sin to your spouse, other Christians, and even to them? That

shows affection for God, and submission to the authority and his Word. God must always be our greatest affection.

## **V. Our Relationship With Others**

- A. As we walk in the light of fellowship with one another (I John 1:7) as Christian brothers and sisters, how is that to affect our parenting?
  - 1. We have the opportunity to observe the example of other parents.
  - 2. We have the opportunity to receive input from other parents.
  - 3. We have the opportunity to help other parents.
- B. Encouragement should be our first area of observation for anyone. However every parent is sensitive when it comes to their children. When you bring some observation, take the time to also think beyond the corrective situation into ways they can be encouraged.
- C. Correction should be given honestly, but with compassion, and from a perspective that we are only seeing a partial picture of the situation.
- D. Follow-up can be both helpful and encouraging. It also expresses that we are concerned for them and their child, not just for working through the situation.
- E. Always remember, the goal is walking together in fellowship, helping one another care, lead, and train our children (of all ages), in the ways of the Lord.
- F. How do your children (or your friend's children) treat the other boys and girls around them? How they interact with their friends and others around them can be a wonderful window into their souls. Take a regular look inside.
- G. As parents take this to heart and look at their own children with a discerning eye and measure their heart-attitudes against the Word of God, fellowship is assured. As parents we can benefit from the observation and help from others Christians. How about asking, "How do you think my son or daughter is doing in this area? Is there anything that I need to know or address from your perspective?"

## **VI. Conclusion**

- A. The relationship with your teenager (really all of your children) is an important relationship to God. As in all relationships, it requires work. This work and investment of time will yield fruit for years to come.

- B. What do I look for in my pre-teen?
1. An approachable, teachable, seeking spirit
  2. Acceptance of personal responsibility
  3. A desire to serve others more than him/herself. This can often be seen in an 'inclusion' of other kids, both older and younger.
  4. An awareness of sin, and a need for a Savior
- C. Remember, our hope and faith is not in ourselves, or our process, but in our God and the power of the gospel.
1. "I have been asked, 'Don't you think that if you raise your children the right way, God has promised to save them?' If such a promise existed, it wouldn't comfort me. I haven't raised them well enough. Looking over their lives, I want to join the ranks of parents who would like to do it over again. I am keenly aware of shortcomings and limitations. You have reason for hope as parents who desire to see your children have faith. The hope is in the power of the gospel. The gospel is suited to the human condition. The gospel is attractive. God has already shown great mercy to your children. He has given them a place of rich privilege. He has placed them in a home where they have heard the truth. They have seen the transforming power of grace in the lives of his people. Your prayer and expectation is that the gospel will overcome their resistance as it has yours." Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*

## VII. Application

- A. How would you rate your faith for growing your relationship with each of your children (and teenagers)? How could you grow your faith?
1. *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 2Peter 1:3,4*
- B. What would be one step to take with each of your children to grow your relationship with each of them?