

XLV. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“Biblical Parenting – Eight Essential Objectives”

Ephesians 6:1–4

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In this study from Ephesians I will give you eight essential objectives to Biblical parenting but they are not just eight for there is one ultimate objective, one essential objective and then six objectives to accomplish the ultimate and essential objective. There are a couple of reasons why I am doing this study. It is not because I feel like an expert in Biblical parenting but I do feel like I have survived because all three of my children are up now. Once that happens you feel a certain amount of freedom to speak on these things at that moment in time. One reason I am doing this is because of the recent weekend of talks on the Real State of the Union conference. I know that if a social state-ism is followed up by a fascist state-ism then I know there will be two targets. For state-ism to succeed the family must be deconstructed and the church must be marginalized, removed or eradicated and I know those two things will happen in that situation.

In the era that you now live you are in a pointed deconstruction of the family. Fatherhood is now dismissed. The notion of the necessity of a father and mother defined by male and female has been dismissed. The notion of even the necessity of two parents is being obliterated. The idea of parental rights to raise children before the Lord has been undermined. I was just speaking with someone who had to assert in the public school system that they had the final authority on what their child was going to learn and not the administration of that school or the state. Yet that would be an oddity today because most parents are intimidated by the professional guilds of education, media, the academy and others. So I know maintaining an understanding of Biblical parenting is crucial for what needs to happen in our country and because of what’s happening in our country. Such parenting is under assault in many ways both in an overt fashion as well as in a covert fashion.

Secondly, in terms of that, in the state of this nation today, whenever the state takes over, deconstructs or redefines the family then the culture is destroyed. Therefore, if the church is building strong marriages and families in and for Christ that becomes one of the greatest weapons in the hands of the Spirit of God to reach into that state. In other words, as marriage is assaulted if we burnished, framed, refined and grew Gospel-saturated marriages and therefore Gospel-saturated homes and families, then that would stand preeminent and stand out in a culture in which chaos and confusion reigns.

Another reason I am doing this is I look at families today and I see a confusion of priorities, of what is crucial and as a result of that I see families that are entirely overstressed in their calendars. There are no margins in life in the parenting endeavor or in relationships whatsoever. In fact, everything is crammed into every moment and day where there is an overlap. In other words, what is being attempted can’t even be done in 24 hours. To put it simply, we’re too busy. It is a generation of, if we don’t do this, then I haven’t been a good parent so anything that the culture or people say to do then I have to do it or I’m not a good parent. It is what one person called the IMO generation, meaning if I don’t do everything that is being touted what’s popular or being declared fashionable and faddish at the moment for my

family, then I am missing out. Our children are way overscheduled recreationally and very little time is leftover simply just to go in the backyard and play.

I know I'm sounding like an old man but I won the World Series in the backyard of my house so many times. I fought three wars and won every single one of them, usually every week. All I needed to construct all I need to do that were pine cones and pine branches that fell from the trees. Imagination and initiative are gone because there is no time for it. It has gotten to the point where children just don't have the time to be children anymore. I am not opposed to organization or thoughtful coaching and all of that but it doesn't have to totally dominate the time. I could go on and on about the entertainment industry and how much the technology of today is robbing our children of their time as they have been addicted to the constant stream of images across a screen (TV, computer, iPad, iPhone etc.). In all of those things are the increased dangers of the inability of the parents to control that which people are bringing to their children. In fact, they find ways to bring it to their children. All of those things concern me.

Most of all is the positive thing of the joy of understanding what the Lord has promised and provided through His principles to raise up our children in this world for Christ so that Christ uses them in this world and takes the world out of them by the power of the Gospel. The first ministry of importance in their life is a dad and mom who know the Lord and they don't need to have their children love them or as their friend. They are free in Christ to be their children's parents. That is what my heart desire is.

First, I want to give you the ultimate objective for Biblical parenting. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. It is the glory of God and your joy in that glory in your parenting and in your children. When I say that, the objective of your parenting is not your glory but God's glory in your child. The objective is not their glory, but God's glory in your child and your joy is directly related to how your child becomes an instrument, evidence and a declaration of God's glory in this world. I Corinthians 10:31 says *[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Wouldn't parenting fall under 'whatsoever you do'? The more you glorify Him the more you enjoy Him and the more you enjoy Him the more you will glorify Him. So that is our ultimate objective.

What is our immediate objective to get to the ultimate objective of Biblical parenting? Let's look at the Ephesians 6 text. Here Paul, having talked about walking in the Spirit talks about how you walk in the Spirit as a husband and wife and now he says this. Ephesians 6:1-4 says *[1] Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2] "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), [3] "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." [4] Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

The immediate objective is that you do not provoke your children to anger which means you should not have a parenting style that is provoking anger. The word anger there is a root word that looks at the element of frustration. That would be capricious parenting. That would be a parenting coming from what the world is telling you to do. That is a parenting that would come from the exigencies of the moment as you manage your children or are you awed by your children? That brings provocation to your children. Children cannot live to be your salvation. They cannot live and bear the brunt of your reason for existence. They cannot function when the boundaries of life are not clear and the boundaries of life are being re-forced appropriately for that is a provocation to the anger of frustration. What do you put in place? You say 'no' to parenting that provokes children to anger but you do bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

I want to make some things clear in my previous comments. Instead of capricious, inconsistent or self-centered parenting that provokes children to anger that does not mean children will never get mad at you if you parent. That is not what He is saying. It is saying that your parenting has to be designed in such a way that consistency is put in the life child and reigns in the home, bathed in compassion and in conviction of what truth is and the compassion manifesting what love is. To do that you need to bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. Parenting doesn't beat down. It trains up, it brings up physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. You bring them up in the Lord, for the Lord, by using the instruction of the Lord as the Word of God becomes that treasure trove from which you draw upon in terms of how and why you parent and how you are accomplishing the parenting that God has laid upon your heart. So the immediate objective is the parenting in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

So how do we get there? Let's look at Deuteronomy 6. I want you to follow the flow of what this text of Scripture says and then distill some things out of it that we can distill into five functional objectives things in parenting. Deuteronomy 6:4 says [4] "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*" In the Hebrew there are two words for the word 'one' and this is the one that means 'one with plurality.' That is, one that has multiplicity to it but it's singular in existence. This is the phrase used when the spies came back from the land of Canaan and they had a pole with 'one' grape on it the text said. It wasn't one grape but a cluster of grapes but this same word 'one' is used there. So here the Lord is one with multiplicity. That doesn't give us the doctrine of the Trinity but it does accommodate the doctrine of the Trinity. So we have one God that dwells in three Persons as the doctrine of the Trinity fleshes this out.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 says [4] "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*" [5] *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* [6] *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.* [7] *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.* [8] *You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.* [9] *You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Here is this Word that is to be internalized, instituted and instructed. It is on your heart – internalized. It is on your lips to instruct your children and no matter where you go it infiltrates the entire home – the gateposts, doorposts and all over the place. God's Word is there instructing, calling and modeled. It is found in the life. The child is not only instructed and raised in a home in which the Word of God penetrates everything and is everywhere so that they might know and love the Lord their God. They are also taken into the life of their parents so that they can see them live out God's Word when they rise up, walk by the wayside and they go into life to see and experience them.

So here are my five essentials in order to accomplish this. The first thing is that parenting has to have a prioritized home in which the love of God is defined by the Word of God and empowered by the Spirit of God. You have priorities. You might think you don't have priorities but you do. If you will share with me your last month's calendar, your last month's expense sheet and what you discussed in the last month then I can tell you your priorities.

In our Ember's to a Flame ministry I had the opportunity to be involved in the life of a church where they told me mission's was a priority. I asked them if they were sending out missionaries from their church and they said they hadn't done that yet. I asked them to show me their mission's budget and they said they didn't have one yet but that they would have one. I

said to them ‘then it is not your priority.’ Your priorities are where you put your time, money and your heart.

For many Christians, we confess Biblical priorities but we operate with the priorities of the world. That causes our confusion because now we’re trying to accommodate Biblical priorities but in reality our functional priorities are where we spend our time, what we do with our children and where we are putting them. We have adopted priorities from the world and we’re trying to embrace Biblical priorities at the same time and it just can’t be done. You have to decide what the priorities in your home will be. You will know what decisions and priorities you made when your children grow up and you see what they have observed and embraced from what they were taught in their home.

We are living in an era in which this increasing category, surveys, polls and research studies that tell us the younger generation that is going off to college and when they finish college they are not coming back to embed themselves in the life of the church and they don’t have a functional, vibrant, robust relationship with Christ. They may nod their head to spirituality but that relationship with Christ and His church is absent. So people immediately turn to pastors and leaders in the church and say ‘what are you going to do about it?’ That is what I’m trying to do right now and the statistics are very clear.

In the 1960s in evangelical churches, not liberal churches, the priority of a family embedded in the life of a Gospel church was manifested by the fact that in the course of a year as you looked at their monthly engagement in the church on the Lord’s Day, they were at Lord’s Day worship for 3.6 Sundays out of every month. At the turn of the century, I think in 2006, families are now attending Lord’s Day worship 1.8 Sundays every month. Certainly, sports are more important than the Lord’s Day, right? Travel schedules tend to supersede the Lord’s Day and worship. Don’t think that is lost on our children. So when they go out into the world to set their own schedules, instead of nodding their head to the church, they just simply embrace what their parents already have manifested. To them there are other things that are more important than gathered worship and the means of grace to grow in grace. They observe it and embrace it because of those priorities.

What would be some of those priorities that would be crucial? I believe you ought to have a priority of encouraging your child to spend time in God’s Word every day. You can do this creatively. That is why I started doing the 5 minute Fresh Bread just as a place to get started. You can listen to it on the way to school so that your child starts the day with something on the Word of God. You be excited about it. Maybe it is a children’s devotional book that you want to use. This is so that your child learns the priority of meeting with God in His Word and prayer every day.

Secondly, is to have a time of family worship. I’m not talking about anything complicated. Our family worship time was at 9:30pm at night on the bed, singing a song and praying together and then it was time to go to bed. It is the principle that our family is going to spend time in God’s Word together, pray together and talk together. One of the great blessings that comes out of that is they don’t leave. They wanted to hang around on the bed and talk. I had three kids and they all wanted to talk. They haven’t quit since that day. My wife and I used to absolutely rejoice that, that time had set in place an unscheduled time where the priority of relationships could take place. We always tried to make Saturday the reading of the text for the Lord’s Day so that we would come into worship prepared as a family.

A third priority is the Lord’s Day. Gathered worship with God’s people is not something that is trumped by anything else other than God’s providential engagement. I want to

say something positive here. It is such an encouragement to hear that when families go on vacation or have some kind of trip planned that they ask me about a church in that area where they can go and worship while they are away. The Lord's Day is the Lord's Day. I cannot tell you how foundational that is to life.

People ask me why the sign of circumcision done on the eighth day of the month. When was Adam created? He was created on the sixth day. The Sabbath Day was the seventh day. So for Adam his first day was the Lord's Day and then he was to enter into a rhythm of life where he worked six days for the Lord and the next one is set aside to give praise to God to be refreshed in the Lord, in worship, physical renewal and family renewal. So people will ask me what I do on the Lord's Day and I say anything that contributes to corporate worship, personal and family renewal plus physical renewal are the things that allow the Lord's Day to be honored. Those are the principles so you make the decisions.

Now here comes Jesus and He is the second Adam. He goes to the cross on Yom Kippur which is a Friday. He rests on the Sabbath from His work in redemption and He comes forth on the first day of the week which becomes the Lord's Day. What Old Testament signs are pointing to Jesus? They are circumcision and the Passover. The reason circumcision was done on the eighth day and it was embedded in the ceremonial law, was the anticipation that a new week was coming in the second Adam. The second Adam gives us a new week, the eighth day, the first day of a new week, in which we rejoice in His redemption for Christ is our circumcision. My simple point is this. The Lord's Day concept from creation into redemption is not an add-on. God said 'I didn't make you for the Sabbath but I made the Sabbath for you' for it is a gift from God that is given to us.

Our forbearers knew it and our whole culture reflected it. In our generation today we have lost it. I just went to see a movie about a man who was a believer from Africa who was an unbelievable doctor and very intelligent. He began to see what was happening to football players when they would get these concussions. The movie was actually titled 'Concussion.' The movie doesn't go into depth with his relationship with the Lord but thankfully it affirms it and shows that it did impact what he did, how it gave him the courage to do what he did. So when he brought all his information about these concussions before the NFL they said something that was very revealing. They basically said 'Who are you? Do you know who we are? We are the people who own the day that the church used to own.' I believe that believers can succumb to that and have the consequences of it or they can say 'no' to that and say 'I will call the day of the Lord a delight to me and my family.' That is what God calls us to do and how to embrace it. This topic begs for more treatment, but I would repeat, at least teach your child the priority of personal time in the Word and model it for them. Secondly, have family worship and then thirdly make gathered worship with God's people a priority.

Also, embrace the three assets that God has given to you in parenting. One is to parent from a promise. It is a promise that God has embedded in the covenant, secured by the triumphant of Jesus where He says 'I will be a God to you and to your children after you. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, you and your household. The promise is for you and your children and all who are far off even as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.' We live in a world where people are afraid of parenting because of what the world is doing. You have a great God with a great promise so parent from the promise. Don't try to parent to gain a promise but from the promise that is already secured for you in Jesus Christ.

This is why Paul said that your children are holy. He is not saying they are born righteous or innocent. No, when they are born you now have a covenant viper in diapers. They

are born with the poison of asp under their lips. They are born sinners but they are set apart into a home. Why are they holy? This leads me to the second asset.

They are holy because the Holy Spirit has been poured out in your home. That is why believing spouses are told that your presence sets apart your unbelieving spouse. Why? It is because you brought the Holy Spirit and the witness of Christ by the Spirit in your life into that home. You have the Holy Spirit at work within your home.

The third asset is that you have the asset of the covenant community. The last vow in our baptism says, 'Will you in humble reliance upon Divine grace raise your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Will you make use of all the means that God has appointed in the body of Christ?' I cannot tell you how spiritual mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles and aunts have meant to my family in the body of Christ. I not only have an extended family of grandparents and uncles and aunts but I now have an extended family of the family of God that surrounds us. I can't tell you how important it is that our younger and older communities are joining to mentor one another. It is important that you expose your children to these older men and women of the faith to see how they live their life, why they live their life, standing fast for Christ and moving forward all the way to the end for the glory of God. It is important that your children see these assets in life.

Hillary Clinton wrote a book back when her husband was President. (This is not a campaign endorsement.) The book was titled It Takes a Village and in it she quotes an African proverb that says 'It takes a village to raise a child.' That is a fact that you need help in raising a child but the village in Hillary's book was the government. The village in your book is the city of God, the people of God, the church of the Lord Jesus, the covenant community. They take advantage of those people who are prepared to teach them in a Sunday school, to take them on a mission's trip, to put them in a small group, to mentor them and model for them in which all of these things are absolutely crucial as your child grows into adulthood and beyond.

I want to assure of one thing here are Briarwood in which I'll get very personal here. Whether it is John Evans who is our children's pastor or Steven Bunn, our single's pastor or Jay Shaw, our High School pastor, I can promise you that these pastors do not set out to take your place in the life of your children because they can't, but they are there to be an asset to you. Now you take advantage of them and the older people that make up the team that oversees that ministry. These people take the time to mentor your children. Put them in a small group. You can talk with my wife and ask her what two important women did for her in her life. Older women teach the younger women. Older men teach the younger men. That relationship is so important that it not only benefits you but it benefits your children as they get exposed to it and they develop these spiritual fathers, mothers, grandparents, aunts and uncles in the body of Christ.

The fourth priority is the evangelism of your child. Don't make the mistake of raising a Pharisee where you tell them do this, do this, do this and do this. No, speak to their heart. They don't simply need to live like Jesus but they need to come to Jesus. They need to be brought to Jesus. Evangelize your child. All three of my children have come to Christ and all were at different ages when they came to Him. One was converted at 4 years of age in a bathtub and the other two were later on in their life. One thing we tried to do was to not assume they had a personal relationship with Christ just because we did and we were in the church, but call them to believe repent and follow Jesus.

The fifth priority is to disciple your children. Raise them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That means every parent must give their child a Christian education.

Teach them the Word of God. I'm not saying you need to enroll your children in a private, religious school. You might want to consider it but the Bible does not tell us the venue that parents can use. You may decide to homeschool. We didn't and I knew I couldn't but you may be gifted to accomplish it. You may choose tutors to help you or a private school that has the right perspectives or even today a public school, even though the public school curriculum is never an ally to you, you do have allies, coaches, and administrators in the classroom, for which I count them as missionaries for what they do in the public school systems. There are solid Christian schools and one of the things I love about Briarwood Christian is that it is under the oversight of the church and not a parent's counsel so it can have stability and the right kinds of decisions can be made that may not be popular but right decisions will continue to be made.

Here is what I am telling you. The education of your child is not the government's responsibility or the churches responsibility but it is your responsibility. So educate them and make a wise choice in what venues you use and what people are educating your children but you take responsibility to give them a Christian mind. Evangelism gives them a life love. Discipleship gives them a life view. Then you can get a lifestyle. Their life love in Christ will compel them. Their life view will direct them. Their life style will then present Jesus to this world in what they say and what they do.

Finally, make parenting an act of engagement and an act of worship. As an act of engagement, get in their lives. I tell people I got saved out of what I call a drug problem and I say this kiddingly. My dad and mom drug me to church every Sunday morning and evening and every Wednesday evening. When I was at the bottom of my sin at 20 years of age, I still remember what I had heard in that Sunday school, in that worship and that was the tether that began to bring me back to Christ. I am forever grateful for that. I know I was not the most conducive child wondering when we would be going to church next but I'm also grateful that every Sunday morning I went to church I sat with my family. I'm also grateful they let me sit with some of the young people on Sunday night but I was grateful that our family worshipped together. That put parenting as an act of worship built around and in the context of worship. You are worshipping the Lord as a parent and as a parent you are bringing your children into the worship of the Lord.

When I was in the sixth grade my teacher said "Ike Reeder, come to the desk." So I went up to her desk and standing at the desk was a little girl who all the students despised because all the teachers and administrators loved her. She was loved by everybody who didn't love us. At least, we didn't think they loved us. This little girl said "Ike Reeder must report to the office." It was very seldom that a sixth grader would get suspended from school but from previous things that had happened that month I figured I was about to. I approach the office and see Mrs. Mason, the principal and right beside her is my dad. I just figured I was dead at that point. Then Mrs. Mason said "Ike, your father has come to check you out and you are going to go on a trip with him and we are going to give you an excused absence." My dad at that time was in Minor League Baseball umpiring for the Southern League. So I went with him for eight days in Chattanooga, Tennessee where we stayed in a hotel and there I was able to meet Tommy Helms, Dave Bristol and Pete Rose who were minor leaguers coming up to the big leagues. We would all sit together and eat dinner and I just couldn't believe those eight days.

The reason I tell that story is I love the fact that my dad would go in the backyard and play catch with me but I could tell you time and time again of when my dad took me into his life and would tell people 'that's my son.' I was able to watch him live life and that was how I was able to learn life. Take your children when you rise up, when you walk by the wayside, into your

life so that they can see how Jesus is your life every day in life. Do this on the Lord's Day but do this every day as well. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for my brothers and sisters in Christ and the great privilege to serve You alongside of them and with them.

Father, we do pray that You would take men and women like us and build families for Christ and in Christ to give glory to Christ so that our children come to Christ and rise up and bless Your Name and rise up and bless the Name of the Lord for their parents. Father, thank You for these Godly women who have the teaching of kindness on their tongue and for Godly fathers who do not provoke their children to anger but raise them with their wives in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in Jesus' Name, Amen.