

Bringing Up Children Aright

by Zac Poonen

Faithful parents can trust in God's sovereignty and provision, praying for their children and teaching them to praise and worship God, as they grow up to love Jesus and be a blessing in the church and in their home.

Duration: 25:27

Scripture: Exodus 2:7-9, Psalm 8:2, Psalm 127:3-5, Psalm 139:13-14, Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 21:16, Mark 9:23-24, Hebrews 11:23

Topics: "Child Dedication", "Parental Faith"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of dedicating children to the Lord, drawing parallels between baptism and child dedication. It highlights the faith of Moses' parents in Hebrews 11:23 as an example of ordinary yet profound faith in protecting their child. The message encourages parents to view their children as gifts from God, to raise them as arrows in the battle against evil, and to pray for their protection and spiritual growth throughout their lives.

Transcript

We have the practice in our church whenever we have a baptism or a dedication of a child to share a few words so that we understand the significance of it. Baptism is commanded by the Lord. There's no option.

Every believer must be baptized. There is no command in scripture to dedicate a child, so it's optional. But it's an opportunity to give thanks to God, just like in a family.

I mean, if you have a child born in your home, a father and mother would or should come together and thank the Lord for the gift. I think every family does that. And we have built our churches not as congregations or as clubs, but as a family.

So the church is a family. That's the way Jesus intended it to be. Unfortunately, through the years, the message of Christ has been corrupted and churches become a preaching center or a social help center.

The concept of family where we are one, where Jesus said, All men will know you are my disciples by the fact that you love one another, slowly disappeared. So it's because we are a family that we take the opportunity to give thanks for every child born into our family and dedicated to the Lord and say a few words to the parents concerning the child, how to bring them up. I want to read a verse in Hebrews first in chapter 11.

We know that Hebrews 11 is the great chapter on faith. People call it the heroes of faith. And there were some people who did some amazing things here, like external things mostly, splitting the Red Sea and pulling down the walls of Jericho, defeating giants and tearing lions to pieces, raising people from the dead.

And in the midst of all these amazing things, which are spectacular, all by faith, by faith in God, we read of one person or one couple whose faith was manifested, not in anything spectacular, which none of us may be able to do, but something ordinary, which all of us can do. Right in the middle of Hebrews 11. It's quite amazing.

And that is the faith of Moses' parents mentioned in verse 23. Hebrews 11, 23, By faith Moses, and he's talking about his parents here, not his faith. He was a baby.

When he was born, he was hidden by his parents for three months. So his parents had faith. Even though there was an order by the king, Pharaoh, that every male child must be killed.

They were not going to do that. They were not going to allow some law that said children must be killed. It's like abortion.

Sorry, we're not going to do it. And so they hid that child for three months. And that was a risk to their life because it was against the king's law.

You know, in Egypt, when a slave disobeys the king, consequences could be serious. And it says here, there was a reason why they hid that child. They had faith.

As they looked at their child, they saw it was a beautiful child. I don't think it's just because he was a very handsome boy. I personally believe that every child is a beautiful child.

It doesn't matter the color of their skin. It doesn't matter their features. Features are just, chemistry tells us it's just an arrangement of molecules in a certain way.

Which people call beauty. The molecules are slightly arranged in a different way, say they're ugly. Not molecules.

Molecules, molecules. The real beauty is inward. Every child is beautiful because Jesus picked up a child and said, Kingdom of Heaven is like this.

And it had nothing to do with the arrangement of molecules on the face. It had to do with the heart. The humility and the simple trust a child has.

The helplessness. These are the lessons we learn from a child. Humility.

Helplessness. Simple trust. You can learn from any child.

So every child that you receive must have the faith to look at and say, This is a beautiful child. That means we have much more light than Moses' parents. They didn't even have an Old Testament.

We have Old and New Testaments. To whom more is given, more is required. Do you look at every child of yours as a beautiful child God gave you? Yoshi was little.

I don't know how seriously you have taken him. I took seriously every one of the children God gave me. Given with a purpose.

They were not afraid of any king's edict. Who is a king? The king of kings has given us a child. And so today, the king we face is not Pharaoh, it's Satan.

And Satan wants to destroy not only every male child, every female child and every single child, especially of children, especially of Christians. Why? Pharaoh did not want those children to rise up and be another generation that fought against Egypt. Satan does not want our children to grow up and be another generation like their parents, fighting against him and his kingdom.

I'm not afraid of Satan's edict. You don't have to be afraid either. You and I have a responsibility.

As we fight the devil in our lifetime to raise up our children, they will fight the devil in their lifetime. They are meant to be soldiers in the battle against Satan. It says in Psalm 127, verse 3, Children are a gift of the Lord.

And we have to look at our children. It says in Psalm 127, not only as a gift from the Lord, but given to us, like verse 4, as arrows in the hand of a warrior. It means I look at each child as an arrow God has put into my quiver.

And those are the weapons in those days, you know, when they had no, today we'd say bullets or something, but oh, an arrow. God gives us about 18 years to pull the string of the bow and let it go. I had about 18 years with each of my four sons at home.

To pull the string of the bow really tense, aim it at the devil. That's why God gives you children. You have to feed them, float them, educate them, because we don't want them to be tramps or homeless and parasites on society.

We want them to earn their living, give us this daily bread, includes help me educate my children so that they will earn their daily bread as well. That's not the main thing. They must be arrows, trained to fire.

So are the children of one's youth. That means when children are small, when we are young, we get married and we have little children. They are to be like arrows.

Such people, how blessed is the man who has his quiver full of such children. Important thing is not the number, but children who are arrows, whether it's one or two or whatever it is, but they must be arrows. And they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the games.

As our children grow up, they will not be ashamed. Satan's mouth will be shut to your children. You know, Jesus once said, when he saw the children praising the Lord in the temple and the Pharisees said, Stop them.

And Jesus quoted the Psalm and says, Out of the mouth of infants you have perfected praise, still the mouth of the enemy. That's the point. You have perfected praise.

This is in Psalm 8. This is what Jesus quoted. But you remember that incident when he came riding on the donkey and he came into the temple. They were waving the palms and children were all shouting and praising the Lord.

And the Pharisees said, Hey, the temple is not a place for children to yell. And Jesus said, Hey, haven't you read in the Psalms, Psalm 8, verse 2, From the mouth of infants and nursing babes. Jesus said perfected praise.

But here it says established strength. The strength in praise and the purpose is to make the enemy shut his mouth. So praise, you combine this verse with the verse in Matthew 21.

See, praise is the strength with which to shut the mouth of Satan. So we must teach our children to thank the Lord and praise the Lord from a very young age. To be grateful.

Maybe our children are not as smart as other people's children. They can still be arrows if you pull the string properly. If you are not lazy about pulling the string.

And one day your children leave the home and you haven't been serious about stretching that string and really aiming that child at the devil. Then we have failed and we have to repent. Arrow just flopped down on the ground and didn't go and hit any enemy.

Say, Lord forgive us. Help us to do it better. It's a wonderful thing to hear these things when our children are small.

I'm very thankful that I understood these truths from scripture. When I was a new father I got it from scripture. Most churches don't teach much about these things.

Have you all been Christians so many years? Have you heard some of these things you heard this morning? That is how rare teaching on bringing up children is in the world. Some of you have been believers for so many years. Why is it we don't hear things from scripture? Who has hidden these things from us? See.

It is there. I discovered it by reading scripture. Nobody taught me.

I mean this book has changed my life so much in the last 56 years. I'm still discovering things. I encourage you brothers and sisters.

Read the word of God. It is more important than the daily news. It is more important than all that you can get by surfing the internet.

Not against those things. Have a priority. God's book is more important than Facebook.

Remember that. Always. You can spend so many hours with Facebook.

God's book deserves a little more. This verse. Something about Moses in Exodus 2. Moses' parents again.

You read about. They hid him in a basket. And prayed.

I'm sure they prayed. They were people of faith. They put it into the river Nile.

Full of crocodiles. And said Lord. It is too big now to hide this child at home.

The enemy will come. Please protect this child. What a wonderful thing as you send out your child to school.

All the evil influences. They are in school. They are just like crocodiles.

I'll tell you that. Particularly nowadays. And into the world as they grow up.

It's like putting a child into the river Nile. Saying Lord please protect this child. We can't do it.

Crocodiles are too strong and we won't even see them. You can protect our child. I tell you God answers prayer.

It's faith. What a lot you can do for a child with faith. Many times I've seen.

And I pray for my children or even grandchildren now. I think of that story of a man. Read it at the end of the story of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Peter, James and John said let's be here. And Jesus said no we can't be here. There are needy people down in the valley.

I've got to go down. And when he came down there was a needy father there. Holding his child.

He said his child was more serious than any of ours. So serious he would throw himself into the fire. He was demon possessed as a little child.

And he comes to, he brings the child to Jesus and said if you can do anything please help us. Jesus said if you, not if I can, if you can believe. I like that place.

Mark 9 where he says to Jesus if you can and Jesus replies if you can. If you can believe all things are possible. I've often pictured that.

Take your little child before Jesus like that father. Don't say if you can. Say you can.

Bring up this child. Be a disciple of Jesus. Please give us wisdom.

Protect this child from the crocodiles in the world. And we read that God answered this prayer in an amazing way. There was Pharaoh's daughter came along.

Who timed that? That was God. Timed Pharaoh's daughter coming for a bath in the river Nile. And she saw this little child and Miriam was hiding.

Miriam, Moses' sister was hiding in the bushes to see what would happen to this basket. And saw Pharaoh's daughter picking up the child and what a wise girl she was. She immediately ran and said can I, verse Exodus chapter 2 this is.

Exodus chapter 2 and verse 7. Shall I go and call a nurse from among the Hebrews? This is a Hebrew child. Can I call a nurse from the Hebrews? Young girl, 12 years old and wise enough to say not to say this is my brother. And wise enough to say not shall I call its mother but shall I call a nurse.

Yeah, those parents had brought up that girl with a little wisdom. Be wise as serpents. Shall I call a nurse, nurse this child? Pharaoh's daughter said go right ahead.

So the girl went and called the child's mother. And this is the word I want to give all of you parents. What Pharaoh's daughter told Moses' mother is what Jesus tells you as a father or mother.

Verse 9, take this child and nurse him for me. The Lord says one day I'll give you a reward for it. A word.

Each of you who have children take this child Jesus says and nurse him for me. One day I'll give you a reward. There is a reward for every parent who has faithfully suffered and struggled, sought with all their heart to bring up their children in an evil world in the midst of the crocodiles of the Lord.

Don't give up the battle, never. And don't give up the battle even if they're grown up. My children are in their 40s.

I still pray for them. Annie and I, even this morning, don't ever give up. If your children are drifting away, pray for them.

God can bring them back. Pray that they'll be protected from the crocodiles. It's amazing what prayer can do.

And nursing for me. I'll give you your reward. We have a dear brother in one of our churches in India.

Godly young brother. And he has three daughters. His eldest daughter developed cancer.

She was about 13 or 14 years old. They spent lots and lots of money, lots and lots of time in the hospital. Treating that child.

She finally died. Lovely child. One of the finest young 15-year-old girls I have seen.

Godly, humble, spirit of service. Such an excellent example. Always modestly dressed.

Unique example. It's like the story I heard of a farmer who was... I mean, not a farmer. A gardener who was taking care of a rich man's garden.

One day one of the best roses in the garden was plucked. He realized the owner had the right to pluck any rose from the garden. It was his garden.

He said, well, I'm only the gardener. The owner can come and pluck any rose he wants from the garden anytime he wants. So that rose was plucked from that family.

And I wrote to that brother. And I said... I said, see brother, God sent a little helpless baby to your family 15 years ago. What a fantastic job you did in an evil world.

To bring up that child in 15 years. Godly. The spirit of service.

Loving Jesus. Humble and modest. No airs about herself.

I mean, there are people who are 50, 60 years old who don't have those qualities. And you did it in 15 years in that child. Sent that child back up to heaven.

Ready to go. What a work you did. Just thank the Lord.

Think if you hadn't done that work in those 15 years. You never knew when the child was even 11 or 12 that it wouldn't be living more than 2 or 3 years. So we have our children for a very short while in our homes.

The Lord says to us, nurse this child up. Train him up for me. And I'll give you my reward.

And part of that reward we get even on earth. When we see that child grow up. Live for Jesus Christ.

Be a witness for him. May that be true for the 3 children we are praying for today and for all the children. That we have in this church.

In our family. Okay. Okay, we'll pray for them one by one.

Name is? Chinonso. That's a boy or a girl? Sorry, I don't know. Here's a boy, Chinonso.

Let's pray that he join with me in prayer that he grow up to love Jesus. Heavenly Father, we pray for dear Chinonso. And we dedicate this little lovely boy to you.

A gift that you have given to our dear brother and sister. Give them great wisdom parents to bring up this little child in the fear of God. Love you.

Fear you and to live for you. And pray that early in life he will give his life to Christ and be born again. We pray that you'll protect him from all harm, sickness, danger, accidents.

And also the other 2 children, Lord. We pray that the blessing of the Lord be upon these children, upon this family. We dedicate Chinonso to you in Jesus name.

Amen. God bless you. Amen Lord.

Okay. This is Eli. Elias.

Lord Jesus, we dedicate Elias to you. Eli and we pray that he will give his life to you early. Be born again and be a child of God.

We pray that your hand will be upon him and give wisdom to the parents to bring him up in the fear of God. Ari and Caleb as well. We pray that these children will be a credit to your name.

Protecting life from all sickness, harm, danger, accidents and the other children too. We pray that he'll grow up to be a blessing in the church and in his home. We dedicate Eli to you.

In Jesus name. Amen. That by the way is one of my grandchildren.

I have 14. By the grace of God. What's his name? Persis.

Persis. Lord, we dedicate Persis to you. We pray in Jesus name that she will love you and be early in life.

Be born again. Protect her from all harm and sickness and dangers and accidents. We pray that the parents will have wisdom to bring her up in the fear of God.

She'll be a child of God and a blessing in the home and the church. Thank you. For all these three gifts.

Bless this child in Jesus name. Amen. Thank you.

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