

Bringing Up Children in God's Ways

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of building a strong foundation of God's love, personal life, and family life in order to have a successful ministry.

Duration: 27:00

Scripture: Genesis 18:19, Proverbs 22:6, John 17:23, Ephesians 6:1-4, 1 Timothy 3:2-4, Hebrews 12:5-7, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Christian Parenting", "Family Ministry"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of building a strong foundation in God's love for our Christian life and ministry, likening it to constructing a house. It highlights the significance of personal life, family life, and ministry, stressing the need to prioritize these aspects in the right order to avoid collapse. The message delves into the biblical principles of bringing up children in the fear of God, drawing insights from Abraham's example and New Testament qualifications for elders.

Transcript

Welcome once again to Words of Life. In our last few sessions we have been considering the importance of the Christian home. In the new covenant, we can say our Christian life and ministry is like building a house.

The foundation for that house is the perfect love of God for us. The assurance that you have of that. If you don't have a clear assurance that God loves you as he loved Jesus Christ.

If you don't have a clear assurance that God loves you as he loved Jesus Christ. Your house will shake sometime or the other. Your life will shake.

So make sure this foundation is firm. That you don't have any doubt at all about God's love for you. Let me tell you something.

All suspicion. All jealousy. All competition.

All comes from not having this foundation. If you have this foundation, your life will be absolutely secure. God loves you as he loved Jesus.

John 17.23 God loves you as he loved Jesus. Then on that we build what we call the ground floor of the first story. And this first story of the house is our personal life.

1 John 1.7 If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. We are not talking about perfection.

We are talking about walking in God's light. According to the light we have at each stage in our Christian life. We must walk in that light.

Not in the light that an older brother has. But the light that you have. That is enough for your personal life.

Even if you walk in the light with God, that light will not change. The blood of Jesus will constantly cleanse you from all sins. When you walk in that light, your conscience will be purified before God and man.

This is your personal life. On top of that you build the second story. That is your family life.

Just as Christ loved you, you will try to love your family life. We have thought about that. There is another part there.

You have to raise your children in the fear of God. On top of that you build the third story. What is that? Your ministry to other people.

That has to be built with these three things underneath. The foundation of God's love for you. Your personal walk with the Lord.

And your home life. On top of that only you can build the third story of your ministry. Many people have tried to have a ministry without having these three things underneath.

And then the whole building collapses. It may stand for some time. But like you suddenly hear of some preacher who has fallen, that happens.

And it is a failure of one of these three things. Foundation, first story, second story. Then only we can have the third story of our ministry.

And we must always watch this. You can start like this. And after some years, as God blesses your ministry, you can begin to ignore your personal life.

Or you can begin to ignore your home life. Then you are in danger in your ministry. And your ministry can be ruined.

So, we want to think a little bit about bringing up children now. How important is this? In the Old Testament, we read in Genesis chapter 18, an amazing statement that God says about Abraham. Why did God choose Abraham? We can say, so that through him the nation of Israel will come and prepare the way for the Messiah.

But notice further what God himself says in Genesis 18 and verse 19. I have chosen Abraham in order that he may command his children in his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice. Why did he choose him? To bring up children whom he could command to live in righteousness.

Why is that important? So that, it says here, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham everything that he had spoken. The Lord had spoken to Abraham. So, for the Lord to fulfill what he had said to Abraham, it was essential that Abraham brought up his children in a godly way.

And one of the clearest examples of the way he brought up Isaac in a godly way is this. That in Genesis 22, when he takes Isaac up to the top of the mountain, and Isaac doesn't have a clue where the lamb is going to come from to be sacrificed. He had seen his father sacrifice to the Lord's lambs many times.

But now, he is a young 25 year old man, strong and healthy, able to carry all that load of wood up to the top of the mountain. His father Abraham was an old 125 year old man walking with a stick up to the top. He himself is 125 years old, Abraham.

And on the top of the mountain, Abraham lays the wood on that stone altar. And then he tells Isaac, there is no lamb here, you are the sacrifice. I want you to lie down here, I am going to tie you up and I am going to kill you.

Imagine the shock that this 25 year old young man gets. Which 25 year old young man today will lie down in order to be killed by his father? What do we see Isaac do there? He says, dad, if that's what you want me to do, I'll do it. If that's what God's commanded you to do, I'm ready.

Do you see how Abraham brought up Isaac? To fear God, to do whatever God says, even if God says you got to be killed on the altar. Abraham could not have forced him. He was a strong 25 year old man.

Abraham could never have tied him down. And there were no servants with Abraham on the top of the mountain. It was Isaac's obedience that Abraham was absolutely sure of.

Otherwise he would have taken some servants with him to make sure that Isaac does not resist when he tries to tie him down. He didn't take any servants up with him because he knew he had an obedient son. That is why God could bring upon Abraham all the things he had promised.

Much more in the New Testament, we read in 1 Timothy chapter 3, when Paul tells Timothy the type of elders he should choose to lead in the church, he gives certain qualifications. And home life is very very important in those qualifications. In those days there were many people who were converted from heathenism who had two wives.

Many of them had divorced the first one and got married again. So they had two wives. One living, their first wife somewhere else now.

Now the second one whom he is married to. And the Lord said through Paul, such a person can repent and come and be a part of the church. But he can never be an elder in the church.

A divorced person cannot be an elder in a church because he has got two wives. So in 1 Timothy 3, 2 he must be the husband of one wife. And then it goes on to say verse 4, he must be one who can manage his own family well.

Keeping his children under control with all dignity. He is not talking here about grown up children who have gone and established their own homes. He is talking about those who have got children in their own home.

He must be able to control those children. If you got five children and you cannot control them at home how can you control fifty people in a church or two hundred people in a church if you can't control three children at home. That's why it says in verse 5, if a man does not know how to manage his own household how will he take care of the church of God.

So an elder is tested in this area. Is he qualified to lead God's church? Well let's see how he is running his own home. The way he runs his home will be the way he runs the church.

And if his children have no respect for him people in the church are not going to have any respect for him either. So we see here the tremendous importance of the way we have brought up our children if we are to have any responsibility in God's church. And therefore we need to understand scriptural principles of bringing up children.

Children are different. Their complements are different. Their gifts are different.

They have many many differences. If you have 4 children all 4 are different. But all 4 must listen to you as the father.

Otherwise you can't be an elder in the church. In the book of Titus where qualifications of elders are mentioned again it says in Titus 1 verse 6 And the elder must be a husband of one wife. And further it says he must have children who believe were Sikhs not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

Because there is a reason the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward. So family life is emphasized again in the New Testament as a qualification to be an elder in God's house. And if we don't have a good home testimony we have no right to have any responsibility in God's church.

Now this was not required in the Old Testament. How Moses lived with his wife and how he brought up his children was not important. And like that with all the other prophets their whole life was not fundamental to their ministry.

But in the New Covenant it is. Like I said earlier our ministry is the top floor above our family life. So if you ignore your family life you are going to destroy your ministry.

So we turn to Ephesians in chapter 6 we read some instructions of Father. It says your children obey your parents and the Lord for this is right. We must not expect our children to obey us in some area which is contrary to what God says.

Don't ask your children to answer the phone and say Daddy is not here. That's teaching them to tell a lie. We must never do that.

That's just an example. Don't permit your children to cheat in the examination. And it says here the children must honour their father and mother.

No, they can't even read when they are one or two years old. So who is going to teach them to honour their father and mother? Parents. Parents have to tell them and you have to listen to Daddy and Mommy.

You must always speak respectfully to Daddy and Mommy. You must always speak respectfully to older people. Many many Christians are not teaching their children these things.

We have to teach them because they can't read the Bible themselves when they are one year old. And if you wait till they are old enough to read these verses by the time it may be too late. But we need to teach some of these things to them when they are one year old.

Honour your father and mother. And when you are at home that means obey them. And when you leave your home you still have to honour your father and mother but you don't have to obey them.

Because you are not a child at home. How do I know that? How do I know this is God's standard? Whenever we have a doubt about anything in scripture let's look at the earthly life of Jesus. How do we see the earthly life of Jesus? We read there that when he was at home in Luke chapter 2 we saw the other day he was subject to Joseph and Mary throughout.

Joseph had probably died but Jesus was subject to Mary right up to the age of 30. And then he begins his ministry after he is anointed with the Holy Spirit. Then his relationship with his mother has changed.

Now he says who is my mother? Those who hear the word of God and do it. So when his mother comes and tells him they don't have any wine in the marriage in Cana. Jesus says woman what have I got to do with you? In other words don't try to interfere in my ministry.

My hour has not yet come. I will do things according to the father's leading. I'm not going to listen to you anymore.

That teaches us that when a child leaves the home and sets up his own home whether he is married or unmarried he has moved away from home and set up his own home. He doesn't have to listen to his father and mother anymore. Jesus didn't listen to Mary anymore but he cared for her.

Even when he was dying on the cross he cared for his mother. He made some provision for her to stay. We have to teach our children that.

As long as you are at home you must honor father and mother. You must always speak respectfully to people older than you. I find many many parents are not teaching their children these important truths.

And then it says specifically to the fathers. First of all a negative thing. Do not provoke your children to anger.

If you have been a father for some time you know that it's very easy to get angry with our children. They do so many things to irritate us. And to provoke us to anger.

And we have to be careful that we don't provoke them to anger by our reaction. So when I discipline them there must be no anger in my discipline. When I correct them there should be no anger in my correction.

This is where fathers have to be careful. And what do fathers have to teach their children? It says here they must bring them up efficiency exploring the discipline and instruction of the Lord. There are two things.

One is the instruction of the Lord. Which is more than just reading bible stories to them. Teaching them the principles of God's word.

Not just what is written there. But principles of God's word. That's what we have to teach them.

That is the instruction of the Lord. Then what about the discipline of the Lord? The bible says God disciplines us. Because we are his sons.

And he disciplines us in various ways. Through allowing other people to hurt us. Through financial difficulty.

Through sickness. Through pressures at work. And through trials we are broken.

And we are disciplined by the Lord. Lord says in Revelation 3.19 all those whom I love I rebuke and I discipline. So if you love your child you must correct that child and discipline that child.

You have to instruct that child in the ways of the Lord. We have to teach them for example that they should never tell a lie. They don't know that automatically.

We have to teach them not to tell a lie. We have to teach them to speak respectfully to all the people. It's the instruction of the Lord.

The principles of God's word. The principle of salvation. We have to encourage them to receive Jesus Christ as their saviour.

We have to encourage them to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Not just the instruction of the Lord. But the discipline of the Lord.

Where we correct them. Rebuke them. Punish them.

And when they are small use the rod on them. Proverbs is a new covenant book in the Old Testament. And here it says in Proverbs chapter 22.

Some very good verses. First of all verse 6. Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. And further in verse 15.

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of discipline will remove it far from him. Isn't that interesting? There is foolishness in the heart of every child. But if you take a rod and hit him at the bottom and he disobeys you there is a connection between that bottom and his heart.

Your foolishness is driven out of the heart. It says further in Proverbs 23 and verse 13. Don't hold back discipline from the child.

Although you beat him with the rod he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod and deliver his soul from shield. So children need to be disciplined.

In Hebrews chapter 12 it says here verse 5 My son don't regard lightly the discipline of the Lord because the Lord disciplines and scourges every son whom he receives. Then it says in the last part of verse 7 What son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are without discipline you are illegitimate children. So God disciplines us and he is the best father and we need to discipline our children.

Not in anger. God doesn't do it in anger. But to correct us and lead us in the right path.

And though this is not written in scripture my recommendation is once your child becomes 13 years old you should not hit them physically anymore. Treat them like adults. After that you can correct them, rebuke them.

Put your arms around them and pray with them when they do something wrong. But if you have done a good job of discipline by the time they are 12 years old you won't have much problem later on. You must have faith that God will help you to bring up your children properly.

Husband and wife must pray together for their children. Lord, bring our children up in your ways. Only God can help you.

God will help you because he wants you to bring up godly children. Will you pray now? Will you bow your heads and say Lord help me to be a good father and a good mother to bring up my children in godly ways. Not for our name but for your glory.

Thank you Lord. In Jesus name. God bless you.

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