

Parenting 101 - Loving Leadership

Ephesians 6:1-4; Psalm 78:1-8

As we continue in our series, “*God and the Rest of the Week*,” we will be applying the Gospel to our parenting. I know not everyone has children at home with you now. But I hope this is **relevant the whole church** in at least three ways:

1. **We are the Family of God** - so all of the children of Oakwood are YOUR children spiritually and you can lovingly lead them and lovingly assist in their training.
2. And just as the lessons on marriage were helpful to singles in praying for married couples and encouraging them, so these lessons on parenting can be helpful for those of you without kids **to pray for and support those who do.**
3. Finally, we are all children of God - and we are called to parent our children as God parents us. So we can all apply these principles to ourselves as **we are called to obey God our Father** just as children are called to obey their parents.

Think of how God parents us. He is the perfect heavenly Father - He knows us completely, accepts us as we are but leads us to become more like Him. **He is our Good Shepherd.** He walks with us through our deepest valleys. He protects us from the many dangers around us. He leads us to green pastures and quiet waters. He heals us and strengthens us.

God loves us as a Father. Everything He does is done in love. We will see **there are two keys to God's parenting and two keys for us - loving leadership and loving discipline.** This week we will discuss loving LEADERSHIP in the home, next week we will focus on loving DISCIPLINE.

Parenting 101 - Loving Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Model● Lead	“Children, obey your parents in the Lord... Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:1,4
Parenting 201 - Loving Discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Teach● Train	

All Christian parenting must be **bathed in love** - the love of Christ should overflow from us as we experience His love each day. And if we truly love our children we will LEAD them in worship and devotion to Jesus and we will discipline them, helping them fill their

minds with the Word of God and submit their wills to the authority of God. Jesus modeled perfect love for us and leads us into it.

Our job is to **BRING UP the next generation** - to raise them from a position of selfishness and foolishness - and through loving leadership and loving discipline to help them grow up in the Lord.

Now, I'm mainly going to address PARENTS, but Paul also addresses CHILDREN directly. So notice this, **kids - this is God's Word to you:** "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." God has not left this unclear. God gave you parents to OBEY. Kids - your job is to obey your parents. Parents - your job is to teach them to obey.

We used to say this to our boys when they were younger - "**YOUR JOB is to OBEY. Our job is to teach you to obey.**" When our boys were small we lived off and on with my parents, in their house, and they had several very large birds - like large birds: the African Gray was the small one.



They had a severe macaw who was super grumpy. Eventually they got a blue macaw and a moluccan cockatoo. Big birds. Filthy creatures.

So as our boys were learning to crawl and pull up on things and then walk around, they were surrounded by danger. Mom and Dad have a sign by Gandalf the Gray's cage - ***"Please don't feed fingers to my bird."*** It's not a joke. That bird had it in for me. He would fly over and try to get me - hopping to chase me around the room. They can smell fear, you know.

So we had to teach our boys that some things were ***"NO TOUCH."*** And we couldn't let them learn by experience from the birds - we had to train them not to pull up on those bird cages. It was just like a hot stove. You don't want your kids to learn how hot a stove is by direct experience any more than you want them to learn the power of a car by running into traffic.

So we used that phrase all the time - "Your job is to obey - our job is to teach you to obey." And that usually came after a little whack on the hand or the behind. "No touch means - don't touch that." ***You have to listen.*** You have to obey. ***We love you too much not to teach you to obey.***

So kids - that's your message for today - God gave you parents not just to feed you and buy you video games. God gave you parents to lead you and to train you. Listen to them. Obey. Listen to God's Word:

Kids - Your Job is to Obey

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.'" Ephesians 6:1-3

That is the command for you, kids - OBEY. **And it comes with a promise!** It will go better with you if you obey! Birds won't bite your fingers. Hot ovens won't burn your hands. Fast cars won't squash you into street goop.

But for kids to obey, **they need someone to obey.** And that's where parents come in.

Parents - Your Job is to Lead

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but **bring them up** in the training and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

It is no mistake that Paul addresses **fathers in particular** here. It doesn't mean that Moms are unimportant - far from it! But it means that Dads have a special calling and responsibility to LEAD. If Dad sets the pace, the family comes along. If Dad sits back and lets Mom do all the spiritual leading and teaching, the kids get a mixed signal about what is really important. If Dad isn't really into this stuff then it must not be all that important...

Kids obey. Parents lead. That's the Biblical model. It's called "Parent-directed parenting." ***"Child-directed parenting," is modern insanity.*** This idea of letting kids chart their own course - letting them set the agenda - letting them design their education process and determine their own growth plan... Child directed parenting is absolute craziness.

Children are in no position to DIRECT. They literally don't know anything about anything, much less about parenting. ***"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child."*** Sin reigns over them! Why in the world would you unleash the sinful flesh of your child to be the leader in your home? 2+2 equals 4. It doesn't matter how you FEEL about the answer. It matters that you learn what is true and right. Children must be led.

So let's get into loving leadership this week and then loving discipline next week. Join me in **Psalm 78**. We will see the two commitments of loving leadership - first to model our love for God and then to lead our children into it.

As we seek to **shepherd the hearts of our children** - leading them to the green pastures and still waters of a relationship with their Father in heaven - this week we will focus on the leadership and guidance side of that, like a shepherd going in front of his sheep and calling them to follow. Next week we will see the discipline side, when the shepherd has to use his staff to wack the sheep that is biting or to separate two sheep who are fighting or to redirect a sheep that is straying.

1. Model love for God - in your heart

"Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth... so that they should set their hope in God... and not be like their fathers... whose heart was not steadfast." Psalm 78:1,7-8

The first key to Christian parenting is to ***MODEL love for God***. If you don't set the example in this area, everything else will be thrown off. Moms, Dads, this is the heart of your family - your personal relationship with God. If you love God with all of your heart, soul,

mind and strength, everything else will work itself out. If you compromise your love for God in different ways - even little ways - your kids will pick up on those compromises.

The bottom line is that **our kids become like us** - for better or for worse. And our kids pick up WAY MORE on what we DO than they do what we SAY.

- You might **SAY church is important** but if every other weekend you go to Disney or the beach and skip church then your words don't matter because you've made it clear that church is NOT that important.
- For those who are watching online - are you treating worship in the same way you would if you were here live? Are you singing and taking notes and paying attention the whole time? Do you have the whole family sit down and engage? Trust me, if Mom is working in the kitchen and Dad is playing games on his phone while you are "watching the worship service," the kids are getting the message that church is just something you fit in on the peripheral edges of life. It's not really that important.
- Is it any wonder that over 60% of 20 year olds stop going to church? They learned from Mom and Dad early on that it wasn't that important anyway.
- You might tell your kids to **use nice words** but if you regularly YELL and use unkind words, guess what? They'll pick up on that little discrepancy - and more than likely, when they get married - they'll become yellers too.
- You might tell your kids to **read their Bibles** but if they never see you reading your Bible they will conclude that reading the Bible is really an optional thing - it's not that necessary, and eventually you must grow out of it. It's just something old people tell kids to do but they don't really do themselves.
- You might say that **PRAYER is important**, but if you never pray with your kids, if you never pray for your kids, how can they ever come to understand what prayer is much less how important it is?

Parents, what are you modeling in your home? ***What do you REALLY LOVE?*** Is your heart steadfast toward the Lord? Do you love God with ALL YOU ARE? Do you listen to God's Word and keep the Bible central in your family life? Where have you SET YOUR HOPE?

Do you really love GOD or do you really love...?

- Fishing
- Football
- Fashion
- Shopping

- Your job
- TV
- Your health
- Your appearance

Can you see how it doesn't matter what you SAY nearly as much as what you DO. Parenting largely boils down to the example we set. Way more is CAUGHT than is TAUGHT in the home.

So the biggest thing parents can get from Ephesians 6 and Psalm 78 is to really consider **what we are modeling in our homes**. Can we honestly say that we love God 100%? How have we compromised that? How have we forgotten His works and His commandments? How have we let our hearts stray away from Him?

1. Model love for God - in your marriage

“Let each of you love his wife as himself and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” Ephesians 5:33

The center of your family life is your marriage - hopefully both mom and dad set the example of loving God with all they are. And that ***love for God should overflow into the marriage*** - with the husband loving his wife sacrificially and the wife loving her husband respectfully. This **love and respect cycle** - the rewarded cycle - provides essential security for children as they grow up - so they don't have to worry about mom and dad staying together. It shows them what God's love is like - that it is not conditional and temporary but is unconditional and permanent.

This is **the center of your family life** - mom and dad - each of you modeling full devotion to the Lord and each of you loving and serving one another. It is so important to prioritize your marriage - commit to date night at least once a month. Communicate every day. Listen to your mate. Love. Serve. Enjoy each other!

Your kids will carry your example into THEIR MARRIAGES - so work to leave a godly legacy that will help them love and communicate well; don't burden them with bad habits they will have to overcome in their own relationships.

The first commitment in Christian parenting is to model love for God. The second and related commitment is to LEAD.

2. **Lead - so your children can:** See the glory of God
“We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.” Psalm 78:4

Psalm 78 shows us *three goals of spiritual leadership* in parenting. It is our privilege and responsibility as parents to help our children **see the glory of God**. One generation must pass on to the next a wonder and awe at the greatness and goodness of our God. This means opening the Bible to share the great moments in history, especially the beauty of the birth of Jesus, His life, death and resurrection.

These are the glorious deeds of the Lord. Supremely in Christ we see God’s might and the wonders He has done to save us - giving up His only Son as the payment for our sin!

Think of all of the things that compete for the attention of our kids. Our job is to consistently lift up God as the ultimate in glory lest our children turn their hearts and lives to lesser gods.

- Will they come to love **this world** - the comforts and pleasures that come with money...?

- Will they come to believe that **LOVE itself** is ultimate? Will they glorify the vision of a marriage and family as the highest joy in life?

- In the end, will they **glorify THEMSELVES** as the highest good, the greatest glory - listening to the message of our culture to “believe in yourself” and “follow your dreams!”

The only way our children will grow up to see the glory of God as worth more than these other gods is if we LEAD THEM. Without intentional, loving, Biblical leadership our children will be drawn away by the currents of this world.

2. **Lead - so your children can:** See the glory of God and trust Him
“So that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God.” Psalm 78:7

This is **a FAITH issue**. What will our children grow up believing is the highest value and greatest good? Will they truly, deep down, believe that GOD is ultimate? That He is the most glorious, powerful, gracious and loving - and therefore worthy of our love and trust? Or will they come to believe that God is one option among many - something to keep as a part of their lives but not the center of it. Will they place God in a compartment of their lives instead of on the throne of their lives?

Will they “***Set their hope in God,***” or will they “forget the works of God,” and let their hearts turn away from Him?

How are you leading your children to see the glory of God? How are you helping them learn to trust in Him, to set their hope in Him above all? Because your kids - even if they are grown up now - are watching you to see what is really ultimate in your life.

When our boys turned 11 I took them on the ***Passport to Purity*** weekend by Family Life Today. That is a critical time of physical development for kids as their bodies approach the transition into maturity. For each child this is unexplored territory and as parents we can let them figure it out on their own, or we can LEAD them into and through it. Passport to Purity is not just about purity. It is really ***about the glory and supremacy of Christ***. It is about living your life in devotion to Him and committing every part of your life to him, including your purity and relationships.

One of the exercises is **a puzzle**. You give your child a pile of puzzle pieces and say, “put this together.”



You let them struggle for a few minutes and eventually they will say, “where is the box top?” Imagine how challenging and frustrating it would be to try to put a puzzle together without the box top to know what kind of picture you’re trying to make! But that is what it’s like when we let our kids navigate adolescence without guidance. They are putting puzzle pieces together without any way

of knowing what the picture should look like.

We need to LEAD them. Not just when it comes to handling their physical changes but in every area of life. We need to show them that Jesus is Lord of everything - that His glory is supreme. Otherwise, as their bodies mature they could be drawn to worship at the altar of physical gratification and get all confused.

The first goal of parenting leadership is to see the glory of God so our kids come to trust Him. The second goal of leadership is that our children come to experience the love of God.

2. Lead - so your children can: Experience the Love of God
“That they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation... whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.” Ps. 78:8

Our calling as parents is ***to shepherd the hearts of our children***. Kids are like sheep who easily go astray, letting their hearts wander to love, worship and serve other gods. Parents are shepherds, responsible to guide our children to see that God is glorious above all gods and to experience His love so their hearts don't turn away from Him.

Spiritual leadership in the home means **keeping the gospel central** - regularly helping our kids see that their fundamental problem is the sin in their hearts. We will talk about training and discipline next week but as parents we have to remember that simply managing our kids' behavior is not what they REALLY need. ***What they really need is a heart change*** - so they need to learn, understand, believe and respond to the gospel.

And that gospel conversation is not a one time thing so our kids “accept Jesus.” That is a regular discussion, an ongoing dialogue about God's holiness, our sin and the grace and mercy of Jesus to us.

Every time your son or daughter messes up it is ***an opportunity to help them understand and experience the gospel again***. Let's say your 4th grade son - just for an arbitrary example - builds a catapult with his friend and launches 1,000 crabapples into the yard of an old man. (We had these cherry size crab apples up north that were perfect ammunition and in plentiful supply.)

You could just deal with the incident and make him go and clean up the neighbor's yard. Of course you start there. But afterwards you could sit him down to talk about ***what was going on in his heart*** that led him to do something with no consideration for that old man. Then you could talk about the power of sin and selfishness and how only Jesus can change that and help us grow in compassion for other people.

Talking about SIN provides opportunities to talk about GRACE. Get beyond just surface behavior management and work on the HEART. Apply the gospel! Every time YOU

mess up is an opportunity to show your kids the reality of God's grace and how WE ALL need that grace and mercy.

If your daughter had **strep throat** you could give her cough drops and throat spray to manage the symptoms. But wouldn't you take her to the doctor to get antibiotics to get beyond just treating symptoms and cure the infection?

When our kids make bad choices and all we do is punish those bad choices we are only treating the symptoms. **But we have the CURE!** The gospel can change them on the inside! It can clear up the infection of sin - in fact, it is the only thing that can! Don't just treat the symptoms with your kids - provide the treatment to cure the disease.

And **the gospel** is not just about getting to heaven - **it is the power that helps us change every day of our lives.** Remember our theme verse for this series:

Experience the Love of God and Enjoy Him

"That you, being rooted and grounded in love may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Eph. 3:17-19, NIV

This is **how we should PRAY** for our kids and it is **how we should LEAD** our kids - to increasingly believe and experience the overflowing grace of God to us in Christ. His grace is sufficient to wash away our sins. And the promise of the gospel is not just that God forgives our sins - He also CLEANSSES us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). These are the kind of verses we need to teach our children so they learn to take their gospel medicine for themselves! At first we spoon feed it to them. But they will need that medicine every day of their lives!

And it is as we lead our kids to experience the love of God that they will learn what it feels like to be FILLED with His love and **come to ENJOY Him**. That is the key to a lifelong relationship with the Lord - not just serving Him but DELIGHTING in Him. One more key to loving leadership:

3. Lead - so your children can: Know the Word of God and Obey Him

"He established a testimony on Jacob... which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children... that they should set their hope in God and... keep his commandments." Ps. 78:5,7

This was God's design from the beginning. He created Adam and Eve and commissioned them to be fruitful and multiply. **God's plan was THE FAMILY** as the center for passing on His rules and expectations.

Again with Israel God reestablished the family as the central mechanism for preserving His law - not just in the archives of the nation but in the HEART of the nation. Deuteronomy 6 - the heart of the Jewish Law - commands PARENTS:

3. **Lead - so your children can:** Know the Word of God and Obey Him
"These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them to your children and shall talk about them..." Deut. 6:6-7

This brings us back full circle. If you want your children to know God's Word and obey Him, that Word must first be on your heart. **You have to model it.** You have to treasure God's Word and obey His leading with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength.

And when God's Word is on your heart, you will teach it and you will talk about it. That is our preview of next week. Loving Discipline involves proactive, loving **teaching and training.**

So here is our summary for today. Parents must be committed to loving LEADERSHIP.

Loving Leadership

1. Model love for God in your heart and marriage
2. Lead - so your children can:
 - See the glory of God and trust Him
 - Experience the love of God and enjoy Him
 - Know the Word of God and obey Him

Kristin and I are both blessed that we were **raised in loving Christian homes.** Both her parents and mine modeled sincere love for God and lived that out in their marriages. My parents have been married over 50 years now and Kristin's have been married 45 - and still going strong.



From our earliest days our parents were bringing us to good ***Bible teaching churches***, opening the Bible at home, teaching us to pray, leading us to put our faith in Jesus. I remember seeing Mom with her Bible open every morning, reading at the kitchen table. And Dad helping in 100 ways at church, always serving, always taking people into our home.

Kristin's parents, with their military background, took Bible reading to another level. They have been getting up at 5:30 a.m. to read Scripture every day for 35 years. They have read through the whole Bible every year for DECADES!

Kristin remembers hiking with her family up a mountain in the Alps on ***Easter Sunday morning***, right at sunrise, reading the resurrection account as the sun crept over the mountain peak and they huddled together under a blanket.

We were both taught to memorize Scripture from an early age. Since I grew up in the same town and the same church I went through AWANA club and into a program called Bible Quizzing. Kristin got similarly intensive training from her parents, memorizing whole chunks of the Bible like Psalm 91 and Psalm 139.

Every family will look different. Every season of life is different. But parents are ALWAYS called to LEAD. We never stop modeling love for God and we never stop shepherding our kids toward the Lord - helping them see the glory of God, experience His infinite love and live in wholehearted obedience to His Word.

Let's pray!