

## The Focus of Parenting • Deut. 6:4-12

### Parenting Series Part 3

#### I. INTRODUCTION • PROVERBS 4:23

##### A. *Shade Trees*

1. There's an ancient Chinese proverb that says, "One generation plants the trees and another gets the shade."
2. It takes a long time for a tree to grow to the point where it can give shade.
  - a. and if people only do that which benefits them *immediately*,
  - b. they will never plant the trees that future generations can enjoy.
3. When Israel declared its independence and sovereignty in 1948, she inherited a land covered by *wilderness*.
  - a. what wasn't dry and arid desert was swampy, malaria ridden marsh.
  - b. years of ill-treatment at the hands of the Romans and later the Turks resulted in massive deforestation.
  - c. for a time, taxes were gathered based on the number of trees on one's land.
  - d. so, if you wanted to avoid taxes, you cut them down.
4. The loss of forests resulted in a change of climate for Israel and the land became a wilderness.
5. But as soon as the Jews obtained their sovereignty in 1948, they began an aggressive campaign of re-forestation.
  - a. millions upon millions of trees have been planted since then.
  - b. and in many places large, lush forests cover the hillsides and line the valleys.
6. Today, national parks have been built among the trees where families gather for picnics and children play beneath their branches.
7. The seedlings planted by a previous generation are the shade trees of today.

##### B. *Spiritual Shade*

1. As we look at the moral landscape of Modern America, it seems a bit like an *ethical* wilderness.

- a. what isn't an arid spiritual wasteland –
  - b. is a swampy morass of moral filth.
2. The shade trees our forefathers planted in the Word of God and godly parenting have been cut down by *materialism* and *secular humanism*.
  3. The model for parenting, once taken from the Scriptures, has shifted to the so-called “experts.”
  4. It's time that we replanted some trees.
  5. It's time to once again look to the Word of God for direction in how to raise our children.

### **C. Signs of the Last Days**

1. This short series we're doing on Parenting was prompted by a simple phrase in 2 Timothy we looked at recently as we made our way through that book.
2. It's found in ch. 3. Paul writes . . .

#### **1 Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:**

3. Then he gives a long list of things that will mark the moral climate of the last days; and the list is chilling – let me read just a part of it . . .

#### **2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers,**

4. Then we read this -

#### **disobedient to parents . . .**

5. And the list goes on.
6. As we read the list and compare the values that have come to mark popular life today, we realize that if these are signs of the last days, as Paul says, then surely we're there, for never before have we seen not only the *demonstration* of these things, but their *celebration* in every day life.
7. If you don't think there's an epidemic of disobedient children today, then you're not aware of the condition in the schools across this nation.
  - a. thirty years ago, the biggest problem most teachers had was

- students talking in class and gum chewing.
- b. today, schools have lined up to have metal detectors installed and armed security guards walk the halls.
  - c. many teachers are fearful of their students!

#### **D. The Shift**

1. All of this is the result of the removal of the *Bible* as the source of wisdom and guidance for life.
2. It happened this way:
  - a. we've been led to believe that during the Enlightenment, there was a war between religion and science
  - b. the two main myths that boldly declare the triumph of science are the stories of Galileo and Darwin.
  - c. on one side we have the Church and superstitious black-robed priests with their Bibles.
  - d. on the other side we have logical white-lab-coated scientists with their telescopes and clipboards.
  - e. we're told that in the clash between these two enemies logic and reason prevailed over superstition and faith.
  - f. and man was removed from his pedestal as being created in the image of God and was reduced to his proper place – a biological *machine* subject only to physical laws.
3. Scripture was removed as the textbook for understanding life and science set to work to dissect the meaning of life.
4. Parents were told that instead of drawing their direction from Scripture in raising their children, they must heed the newly discovered laws of human nature and apply *new* tools in their parenting.
5. Children became *lab rats* and their parents *technicians*, diligently applying the newest idea, the latest theory.
6. All the moral and ethical shade trees our forefathers planted were cut down to provide fuel for the furnaces of a new scientific era.
7. But as we look back, we realize that we have sown to the wind, and are reaping the whirlwind.
8. Without hesitation I say to you today that those who call themselves the followers of Christ must renounce the wisdom of the so-called experts and repent of trusting in man rather than God.
  - a. it's time to take up the Bible once more and diligently apply

- ourselves to it's counsel
- b. the only hope for the future of our culture is to re—invest it with the Word of God
  - c. and that means, first and foremost to raise our children as GOD directs!

### ***E. Today – The Focus of Parenting***

1. Last week we discovered the purpose and goal of parenting
2. The purpose of parenting is to *bring children up in the Lord*.
3. The goal is to *teach* them obedience and respect.
4. Today, we want to dig a bit deeper and consider the *focus* of parenting.
  - a. what is it parents need to keep their attention on?
  - b. where ought we *focus* our parenting?
  - c. and *how* does God want us to proceed?

## **II. TEXT**

### ***A. The Heart! Proverbs 4:23***

**Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.**

1. The *heart* is the root and origin of all our living.
  - a. it's the fountain from which all speech and behavior flow
  - b. so the heart of our child must be the focus of our effort as parents
2. In Mark 7, Jesus said . . .
  - 21 From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,**
  - 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.**
  - 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."**
    - a. where does murder and adultery originate? In the heart!
    - b. where does theft and greed and lying flow from? The heart.
    - c. all these things are symptoms of a bad heart, and where there is a bad heart, these things will inevitably follow.

3. That's what Jesus said in Luke 6:45

**A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**

4. Whatever fills our hearts will determine what our mouths speak, what our hands do, and where our feet go.
5. Realizing this, parents must focus on their child's *heart* rather than just their behavior
  - a. behavior is the fruit that reveals the root
  - b. it's the root parents must aim at, and then the fruit will follow.
6. I heard a really good illustration about the difference between aiming at the heart and simply seeking to modify a child's behavior.
  - a. a man planted an apple tree in his backyard and waited a few years for it get established.
  - b. finally, after 3 years the tree produced some apples, but they were tiny and sour.
  - c. frustrated, he yanked all the fruit off, went to the store and bought some big, red Washington Delicious apples and brought them home
  - d. then he carefully tied them to the branches of his tree
  - e. they looked good, but the fact is, that fruit didn't belong to that tree
  - f. it was artificial – fake!
7. This is the way many parents raise their children.
  - a. they neglect their child's heart and simply focus on tying the sweet fruit of right actions on to them.
  - b. they never reason with their child or take the time to help the child see *why* they do what they do.
8. Behavior is simply an expression of what's in our hearts and if we never address the *heart* issue, then the issues of the heart will never really change.

### **B. The Bottom Line**

1. All of this brings us to the most important part of this series – Your Child's Greatest Need!

2. What your child needs more than anything else – is a *new heart!*
3. You see, every child comes in to this world with a wicked heart.
  - a. every child is born a sinner; a selfish, self-willed, potential monster.
  - b. never forget that Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy, and Adolph Hitler were once babies.
4. If you find what I've just said offensive, I make no apology – it's what the Word of God says.

### **Romans 3:10-18**

- 10** As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one;  
**11** There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.  
**12** They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”  
**13** “Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit - The poison of asps is under their lips”;  
**14** “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”  
**15** “Their feet are swift to shed blood;  
**16** Destruction and misery are in their ways;  
**17** And the way of peace they have not known.”  
**18** “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

### **Psalm 58:3**

- 3** The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.
5. Children are not born seeking God; they aren't even born morally *neutral*.
  6. They come into the world seeking the fulfillment of their sinful and selfish desires.
  7. And left to themselves, they will pursue a course of sin.

8. Left *entirely* to themselves, there is no evil they aren't capable of – as is so abundantly evidenced by the history of the human race. [\[1\]](#)
9. As adults and parents, we recoil from thinking in these terms
  - a. what we see in a newborn infant is a cute, cuddly little package of innocence
  - b. when we see a baby, we want to squinch up our face, raise our voice two octaves and coo little calming sounds
10. Make no mistake – that newborn is NOT innocent.
  - a. naïve and inexperienced? Yes!
  - b. but innocent – NO!
  - c. the potential for all sin of *every kind* is present in their little hearts
  - d. every child is born morally and spiritually *bent*
  - e. holiness does NOT come naturally to a child – it's learned!
11. If you have a hard time accepting this – just remember that your child is a miniature version of *you* - and you know full well apart from Christ what you're capable of thinking and doing!
12. So mom and dad, don't worry and fret that something you do, some mistake you make in parenting is going to irreparably damage your child and forever doom them to the dark side, as though you've mishandled and dropped a delicate vase.
  - a. your child *begins* on the dark side;
  - b. it's your task to help them realize it and then bring them to the light.
13. The drive to sin is embedded in a child's nature.
14. All that's required for it to come to a tragic harvest is that he or she be allowed to give unrestrained expression to it.
15. Children do not go bad because of something parents *do* - they are bad to begin with and that badness will only grow because of what parents do *not* do.
16. In the vast majority of studies on why serial criminals and violent offenders commit their atrocities, the common factor was a serious neglect of parental influence when growing up.
  - a. their parents abandoned them at an early age
  - b. or were addicts who could provide no parental nurture
  - c. or they were so wrapped up in themselves they had no time for their kids.
17. Friends, one of the reasons why we see such an epidemic of

youth violence and criminal activity today is because of the “hands-off” approach to parenting that so many follow.

18. It’s time for parents to re-invest themselves in the task of raising their children, and to make their child’s *heart* the focus of their efforts.
  - a. this kind of parenting takes *time*; it means spending some real time WITH your child.
  - b. TV, computers and video games are one of the chief competitors to effective parenting
  - c. in all likelihood, implementing the task of training the heart of our child will mean a rationing of these things – just for the sake of TIME – of having enough of it to spend with our children, dealing with heart issues.

### **C. A New Heart • Deut. 6:4-12**

1. If the heart of man is born wicked, as the Bible tells us it is, then the solution is a new heart!
2. And the way we get a new heart is by being born again!
3. So a parent’s most solemn charge is *to lead their child to faith in Christ.*
4. Deuteronomy 6 gives us the prescription for how to do this . . .

**4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!**

**5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.**

**6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.**

5. This passage is the root from which all parenting stems
  - a. in both ancient and modern Orthodox Jewish homes, all education and nurture of children flows from this passage.
  - b. mothers cuddle their newborns and whisper these words into their babies ears
  - c. fathers sit with their children on their laps and together repeat this

**“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”**

- d. this is called the “Shema” from the first word – “Hear!”
- 6. These verses tell us how we as parents can lead our children to faith in Christ.
- 7. There are FOUR things we are taught to teach.

#### First: We Teach Our Children About God

#### **4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!**

- 1. It’s critical we spend time talking with our children about God.
- 2. Of course, this means we have to have to know Him ourselves first.
- 3. If we’re to talk intelligently about God, we’ll have to be students of His Word.
- 4. We aren’t to share our *ignorance*, but our *knowledge* of God.
- 5. Church and Sunday school are invaluable tools parents can use to assist them in talking to their children about God.
- 6. But as we saw last week – *parents* are responsible for teaching children and must take an active role in teaching their sons and daughters about God.

#### Second: We Teach Our Children To Love God.

#### **5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.**

- 1. This is something that is *caught* more than *taught*.
- 2. It’s caught by the example parents provide as *they* demonstrate a *consistency* between their profession and their actions.
- 3. Children may not be all that sophisticated but they *don’t have to be* to recognize hypocrisy.
  - a. and if a mom or dad is doing the first thing – talking about God
  - b. but not the second thing – loving God,
  - c. then the child will come to think that the *fact* of God’s existence doesn’t make any real difference in life.
- 4. We teach our children to love God by loving Him ourselves
  - a. and we demonstrate that love in some specific and practical ways
  - b. we love His Word
  - c. we love to worship Him
  - d. we love to gather with like-minded believers and share our common bond

- e. and most importantly – we DO WHAT HE SAYS!
- f. Jesus made this crystal clear in John 14; the one who loves God obeys Him.
- g. that leads us to the next thing we are to teach our children →

### Third: We Teach Our Children To Obey God

#### **6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.**

1. Moses spoke this, and the words he was referring to were all the words of the book of Deuteronomy, which is the Law of God.
2. Notice where he says the law is to find it’s home – Where?
  - a. in the heart!
  - b. not just the head – not just in outward compliance
  - c. but in the heart – the Word of God is to take root in the seat of our will.
3. Godly parenting means being a *bible teacher* in lives of our children
4. As they grow and experience different things, we’re right there to help them understand and look at life from a Biblical as opposed to a worldly perspective.
5. When they err and fail, when they’re disobedient and sin, instead of simply disciplining them for their actions, we *use* that failure and sin as a way to get them to look honestly at their *heart*, which is the root of their actions.
6. My daughter Karesse is one of the most sensitive little women I have ever known.
  - a. she is so helpful and kind
  - b. if someone is hurt or troubled, she is right there to offer assistance and comfort
  - c. the “mother-instinct” is plentiful in her
  - d. but there’s a problem that Lynn & I keep coming back to with Karesse – she’s messy!
  - e. now – we’ve told her many times that she’s to keep her room picked up and neat
  - f. and while she’s getting better, she still has a long way to go.
7. It’s gotten to the point now that when her room is left messy for a period longer than it should take to clean it up, we discipline her.

- a. once the chastisement has been applied, we talk
  - b. and I ask her *why* she left her room so messy when she knows we require her to keep her room clean.
  - c. she used to just shrug her shoulders
  - d. but we've taught her that a shrug of the shoulder or an "I don't know" are no answer to the question of, "Why?"
  - e. the question is aimed at helping her look *within* and discover what's going on in her heart that she would disobey a requirement that has been so clearly communicated to her and over which she's been disciplined before!
8. Here's how the conversation usually goes:
- a. Karesse, what do we expect out of the way you take care of your room?
  - b. You want me to keep it neat.
  - c. Did you obey us?
  - d. No, I let it get messy.
  - e. Why?
  - f. →Now, here is where she used to shrug her shoulders and say she didn't know. And I would say, that's no answer and I will not accept it. Tell me *why* you chose to leave your room messy.
  - g. her answer was – "I forgot."
  - h. so my response was – "You forgot. Do you have a bad memory?"
  - i. No
  - j. No Karesse, you have a great memory. If I promise you on Tuesday that on Saturday we'll go to the harbor and look at the boats, you're in my room at 7 AM waking me up to get going. If I say we MIGHT go out for pizza, at dinner time you're handing me the phone and the Pizza Hut Coupons. You have a great memory – FOR THE THINGS YOU WANT TO REMEMBER! But you CHOSE to forget the things you don't want to do – like keeping your room clean.  
Karesse – when you walk in your room and see clothes lying on the floor, you *do* think about picking them up don't you?
  - k. Yes
  - l. Then why don't you?
  - m. Because I'm lazy.

n. Yes, and you'd rather do what *you* want to do than be *obedient* to your parents.

o. → silence!

p. What does that say about your heart Karesse?

9. It's gotten to the point with our daughter that when we ask her the *why* questions, she doesn't shrug her shoulders any more – she stops to think about what her behavior says about what's in her heart.
10. Our task as godly parents who are following God's counsel for raising our children, is to apply His Word to their hearts – and their hearts are revealed by their behavior.
11. We teach obedience not merely by demanding that they behave a certain way, but by helping them see their own hearts from a Biblical perspective.
12. Moses elaborates on this in the next verses . . .

**7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.**

**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.**

- a. the Word of God is to be the *context* in which we live our entire lives
- b. it isn't just something we give lip-service to for an hour on Sunday mornings
- c. we ought to *sit* with our children and talk about what God says
- d. we ought to talk about God's perspective as we drive through the streets of our city
- e. we can invite our young children to crawl up on the sofa or at night before they go to bed we can sit with them and talk about the day and how good the Lord is to us
- f. before they get up in the morning we can go in to their room, kneel beside their bed, tousle their hair to wake them up, pray for them, and then ask them what they'd like to see God do that

- day.
- g. very simply, we need to teach our children to look at life and the world from a Biblical perspective, through the lens of scripture!
  - h. of course, once again, this means WE know what the Bible teaches!

#### Fourth – We Can Teach Our Children To *Beware* Of The World

**10 “So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build,**

**11 houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten and are full—**

**12 *then beware*, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.**

1. At the same time that we’re speaking about the *goodness* of God, we need to be realistic about the *perils* of the world.
2. It’s natural for parents to want to *protect* their children – but there’s a difference between *protection* and *isolation*.
3. The fact is, the day will come when we will have to release our children into this world.
4. Parental protection of children should be aimed at *preparation*, not *isolation*.
5. As a child grows and matures, a mother and father must guardedly allow that child to be exposed to what the world is about – and be right there to help him or her discern the difference between the good and the bad through the filter of God’s Word.
6. As these verses show, there’s much to be enjoyed and celebrated in this earth and much of God’s blessing comes to us through the physical realm.
7. But we must *beware* lest we become seduced by pleasure and our hearts turn away from God.

8. Parents must teach their children to learn to discern between good and evil.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Ephesians 6:4*

1. I had originally intended to take a look at Ephesians 6:4 this morning and dig in to what Paul means when he says we are to nurture and admonish our children as we bring them up
2. But the more I studied, the more clear it became that we needed to stop and concentrate on this issue of *training the heart* instead of just modifying the behavior.
3. Next time we'll dig in to the Ephesians passage and see the *means* God has given us to *train the heart*.

#### B. *O'Hare*

Let me end this morning with two stories . . .

##### Story #1

1. Butch O'Hare was a fighter pilot assigned to an aircraft carrier in the Pacific.
2. One time his entire squadron was assigned to fly a mission.
3. But several minutes after takeoff, Butch looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to fuel his plane.
4. His flight leader told him to leave formation and return to the ship.
5. As he was returning he could see a squadron of Japanese Zeroes loaded with heavy torpedoes heading toward the fleet to attack.
6. With all the fighters gone, the fleet was almost defenseless.
7. His only opportunity was to distract and divert them.
8. So he dove into the formation of Japanese planes and attacked.
9. The American fighter was rigged with cameras, so that as they flew and fought, pictures were taken so pilots could learn more about the terrain, enemy maneuvers, and so on.
10. Butch dove at them and shot until all his ammunition was gone, then he would dive and try to clip off a wing or tail or anything that would make the enemy planes unfit to fly.
11. He did anything he could to keep them from reaching the American ships.
12. Finally, the Japanese squadron took off in another direction,

and Butch O'Hare and his fighter, both badly shot up, limped back to the carrier.

13. He told his story, but not until the film from the camera on his plane was developed, did they realize the extent he really went to, to protect his fleet.
14. He was recognized as a hero and given one of the nation's highest military honors.
15. And, as you may know, O'Hare Airport in Chicago was named after him.

## Story #2

1. Many years prior to this, there was a man living in Chicago everyone called "Easy Eddie."
2. Easy Eddie was Al Capone's lawyer and he was very good.
3. In fact, because of his skill, he was able to keep Capone out of jail.
4. To show his appreciation, the gangster paid him well.
5. He not only earned big money, he would get extra things, like a residence that filled an entire Chicago City block.
6. The house was fenced, and had live-in help and all of the conveniences of the day.
7. But there was a problem - Easy Eddie had a son.
  - a. he loved his son and gave him all the best things while he was growing up; clothes, cars, and a good education.
  - b. and, because he loved his son he tried to teach him right from wrong.
8. But one thing he couldn't give his son was a good name, and a good example.
9. Finally Easy Eddie realized that a good name and example are far more important than a lot of stuff.
10. So, he went to the authorities in order to rectify the wrong he'd done.
11. In order to tell the truth, it meant he must testify *against* Capone and the Mob,
12. He knew that Al Capone would do his best to have him killed.
13. But he wanted most of all to try to be an example and to do the best he could to give back to his son, a good name.
14. So, he testified.
15. Within the year, he was shot and killed on a lonely street in

Chicago.

Here's where these 2 stories come together - Butch O'Hare was Easy Eddie's son.

### **C. Mistakes**

1. Mom & Dad, maybe you've made a lot of mistakes in raising your children.
2. Don't despair and think you've done irreparable harm.
3. It's never too late to do what is right – never!
4. Our God is a God of forgiveness and Lord of a New Day.
5. His mercy is new every morning.
6. Maybe you've not been diligent to raise your child and have neglected this whole issue heart-training.
7. It's not too late to talk to your son or daughter and share what you *now* know to be right and true.

---

[\[1\]](#) MacArthur, John • *What The Bible Says About Parenting*, Pg. 31