FBS “Parenting Matters: Wisdom from God’s Word—Devotions” 5-21-17

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**Intro.** All of us have our favorite stories on different aspects of life. My favorite story on parenting is about the seminary student planning on being a pastor one day. He was single & was majoring in ethics and was approved to write on parenting. His original dissertation title was “10 Commandments for Parenting Today’s Children.” A couple of years later, he was married & had his first child. He revised the title to “10 Principles for Parenting Children.” 3 more years passed and he had twins & another one, making for 4 kids. His title became “Some Suggestions on the Challenges of Parenting.” 3 more years passed & he now had 6 kids & no end in sight to finishing his dissertation, which he had revised to “Help Me, I’m Drowning!” The subject of parenting presents a number of challenges, not simply because of the high-level of responsibility in actually doing it but there are so many theories on parenting today—some parents are overprotective & others have an almost anything-goes mentality to everything in between. Like every major part of life, God has spoken to us from His Word to give us wisdom & guidance. As we begin “Parenting Matters: Wisdom from God’s Word,” we look at several Proverbs related to “Devotions” with your children, which is a foundational element to parenting.

Theme: Family devotions

Background: Solomon wrote most of the Proverbs as advice to his son about lessons in life. These verses focus on the lesson of passing on the faith to the next generation.

* It should go without saying, but every proverb recorded in the Bible is part of God’s Word. Thus, when Solomon speaks to his son about wisdom & instruction & how to find it, it is God speaking to us about wisdom & instruction. Moreover, Proverbs 30:5-6 point to the truthfulness of God’s Word & the protection it provides
* Let me give you a few ways to start (or enhance) your family devotions:

**1. While Dad should lead in family devotions, Mom can do it (1:8-9; 6:20-23; cf. Psalm 119:105)**

* When you read the Proverbs, you come across several statements about a son listening to his father (1:8; 2:1; 3:1, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1, 7; 6:1, 20; 7:1, 24; 23:19, 22, 26)—the father should take the lead in the home

Illus: I never struggled with learning the Bible in Christian college or seminary, even though most of my friends did. They’d ask me, “How do you know this stuff?” I’d reply, “I’ve heard it 20 times before—my parents read it to me.” They would say, “Your dad must be a pastor.” I said, “No, he was just a Christian layman who knew he was supposed to raise his children in the Christian faith.” I thought I had a normal upbringing but I learned I had a unique upbringing

* If Dad won’t do it or is away at work, Mom can & should lead in family devotions (1:8-9; 6:20-23)

Illus: One Sunday morning, a mother went in to wake her son and tell him it was time to get ready for church, to which he replied, “I’m not going.” “Why not?” she asked. “I’ll give you two good reasons,” he said. “(1), they don’t like me, and (2), I don’t like them.” His mother replied, “I’ll give you two good reasons why you SHOULD go to church: (1) You’re 59 years old, and (2) you’re the pastor!”

**2. When doing family devotions, read the Bible, ask questions & pray (2:1-6; 4:1-13, 20-27)**

* If you have never done it before, begin with a chapter a day out of John’s Gospel followed by Acts & Romans. Eventually, you can include Genesis, the first half of Exodus & other passages—just because every part of the Bible is equally inspired doesn’t mean it is equally important (Romans is more important than Leviticus)
* Ask simple questions, like “What do we learn about Jesus in this chapter?” “What is this chapter about?” “What do you hear or learn from this reading?” “What can you do differently in light of what you learned?”
* Pray for each other & thank God for His Word

Illus: When you miss a day, don’t beat yourself up or give up (Satan wants you to do that)—just take advantage of the next day. When you & your family don’t seem to get much out of a particular Bible passage, don’t worry about it. Just as a fruit tree doesn’t bear fruit all the time, but it goes through the season of producing fruit & then stabilizing for the next fruit season, so it can be for an individual believer, your family or your church—there doesn’t have to be production all the time, for some seasons are for maintenance (pruning) & stabilizing in preparation for the next season of production. When a season of drought comes, the believer, his family & his church anchored in the Word of God like a tree planted by a stream of water will survive the drought

* If you can sing without causing uncontrollable laughter, then do so—works best with toddlers but other ages can do it

Illus: If you have small children, use a children’s Bible with pictures. One good Bible is the *Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* to help them & you connect the stories to the big picture of God’s plan in Christ. As your children get older, you may want to have a good study Bible on hand for the tougher questions they ask (*ESV Study Bible* is the best I’ve ever seen)

**3. Don’t be afraid to use Scripture memory, catechisms & good Christian books to reinforce God’s Word (4:5-9; cf. Psalm 119:11)**

* I don’t mean “replace” God’s Word, but there may be times you do less reading of the Bible to substitute memorizing or meditating on an important piece of Scripture or you may use catechisms for questions & answers about learning what the Bible teaches about different topics (some people think catechisms are only for Catholics, but they were central in Baptist life in the 17th-19th centuries)
* The goal is to search for wisdom, & Scripture memory & catechisms can help attain it

Illus: You may use a good Christian book to underscore important biblical themes—John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* is about a person’s journey into & throughout the Christian life; C. S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* speak of Christ’s power portrayed through Aslan, the devil as the Witch, the deadly effects of sin & more; J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* highlights Christ’s death & resurrection through Gandalf’s “death” & transformation into the White Wizard, the evils of sin in the ring & the burden of carrying it & more

**4. Let church discipleship supplement your teaching on trusting in Jesus (3:1-6; 24:21)**

* The primary responsibility for raising your children & teaching them about Jesus falls on the parents & grandparents
* The church, where families gather for 3-5 hours each week, cannot be a steady diet of Christian truth

Illus: People leave Sweetwater every year or two saying “I’m not getting fed.” I learned that people leave John MacArthur’s church every year & Charles Stanley’s church saying the same thing. No pastor can give you all you need to be satisfied spiritually

* So teach yourselves & your children at home, but also take advantage of discipleship offered at church, whether it is SS, worship and Wednesday evening ministries. Thinking you & your family are getting enough merely during worship service causes you to miss out, not to mention on the relationships & opportunities to pray for others
* As you teach your children at home, one of your goals is to lead them to trust Jesus, but you need to make sure you are sharing both the basics of the gospel & the necessary response to the gospel. The basics are the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the only sufficient sacrifice for our sins in Jesus Christ & the necessary response is trusting in Jesus (head & heart) as well as repenting from sin (too many neglect this aspect & “believe” in Jesus at an early age but they never repent—they should be broken over their sin)
* The goal in Bible reading & devotions is to learn to trust more in Jesus—if you are not growing closer to Jesus in your devotions, then you are doing something wrong (wrong focus, wrong understanding, etc.)

**Conc.** I’ve had numerous people look at me over the years with skepticism when I talk about how much difference God’s Word makes when read daily & together as a family. Not only will the regular reading & application of God’s Word in your home make a difference in your family—discipline issues with your children, respect issues, communication issues between husbands & wives & parents & children, financial issues & more—but it will also make a difference in your attitude & focus at work in the way you relate to your boss, in your giving & serving & stopping gossip & division at church & the way you relate to pastoral authority (take away God’s Word & I have no authority in your life, but with God’s Word, I can charge you how to live & have His full authority behind me), in the way you relate in your community. Spending time in God’s Word daily as a family will fix the majority of problems & issues you face because you will gain God’s perspective on how to handle it—you will get wisdom from God’s Word—knowing what’s right & doing it. How do I know this? Because I’ve seen it lived out in the family I grew up in & the family I have now & some of the other families I’ve known. No family would claim to be perfect, but lots of families are better off because of their attention to family “Devotions.” Would you talk as husband & wife today to make devotions a priority in your home? Would you tell your children you are going to spend a few minutes each day in God’s Word because the Lord wants you to do it? Maybe you need to begin by trusting in Jesus as Lord of your life—do so today.