



“Modeling: The Task of Parenting”

Idea: Parenting is modeling before your children what it means to be one who walks with God.

Intro: How many parents here feel like you’ve got this parenting gig mastered? I can remember the feelings of terror just after my oldest daughter was born. The thought of trying to figure out how to change a diaper and knowing how hard to burp her overwhelmed me. She was so small. On top of that, there was the reality that I was now responsible for the welfare of such a little and precious life. I had no idea what I was doing then, and even now eight years later, I am still trying to figure this thing out.

Inquiry: As we continue in our summer sermon series on Building the Family, let me introduce you to Manoah. He and his wife lived long ago in the day of the Judges of ancient Israel. The couple tried to have a family, but for a long time they remained childless. Then one day an angel appeared to them and declared they would soon bear a son. The man and woman were thrilled with the news. They also were terrified. Like all first time parents, the thought of caring for a baby was

overwhelming to them. They were unsure about how to raise a child, so they asked God for help.

Then Manoah prayed to the LORD and said, "O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born."

– Judges 13:8

Manoah and his wife had a son, and they named him Samson. The boy grew up and became a hero and judge in Israel. What would have become of Samson if his parents had not asked the Lord to teach them how to parent? Prayer like this ought to be on the lips of everyone who has children. “Dear God, teach us what to do for our children!”

Praying like this, reminds you that as a parent, you have one major and overriding responsibility to model Jesus Christ and His ways to your children so that they will follow Him for themselves. Moms and dads, this is your chief duty as godly parents.

If you want to know the secret to parenting, although it’s really no secret, it is modeling. Parenting is living out your life in front of your children, instilling in them your values and convictions. The art of parenting is modeling. The task of parenting is modeling. A model is a standard; it is an example to be imitated. As parents you should set the standard for your children and provide a godly example for them to imitate. After all, when it comes to teaching, more is caught than taught.

So let’s mine the Word of God for some wisdom on parenting as it pertains to being a model.

1. Move Your Children to God at a Young Age

When you travel there is always a definite destination in mind. I doubt you get into your car with no idea of where you want to go. Traveling like that would make

no sense. No, you get into your car, knowing exactly where you intend to go and most likely how long you will be gone.

When it comes to parenting, as parents you must provide for your children an intended destination for life. I am of the deep conviction that one of the greatest things a parent can do for a child is to help define a vision for that son or daughter's life – to set a destination. Instead of just saying *no*, help them realize what they can say *yes* too. By doing so, when your children become young adults, they will have a better understanding of what they're to do with their lives because you helped them define a vision for their lives.

Are you assisting your children in setting a life destination? Are you helping them develop a vision for their young life?

The Bible teaches us that the most important thing we can deposit into our children is the gospel. The Bible teaches us to unreservedly, unapologetically, and unashamedly teach them to love the Lord God.

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Jesus identified for us in Mark 12:29-30 that what we find in Deuteronomy 6 is the most important commandment in Scripture. Loving God is what the Christian life is all about!

We are to love the Lord with all of our heart. It speaks of a genuine and strong emotional love for God. We are to love God with all of our soul. Our soul includes the mind and the will. Our love for God, therefore, is to be thoughtful, reflective, and carefully considered. It's to be cognitive. We are also to love God with all of our strength. Our love should is never to be lazy; instead it taps into every bit of power our bodies can muster. Put

together, we're to love God with all that we are. Do you love God like that? Do you love Him without reservations? Do you love God with whole-hearted commitment, expressing your deepest love for Him? This is serious stuff.

Look at verse six. Keep in mind that God is speaking to parents. The implication is that if your kids are going to *get it*, you must first *get it* in your own heart. You cannot lead your children to do something that you are not doing. You cannot teach your children to love God if you don't love God.

Appl: Your children will grow up and be unapologetic about their faith in Jesus when they see mom and dad standing courageously and passionately pursuing Him. What are we teaching and raising our kids to believe? The truth is, many in the church are raising kids committed to everything in the world except the only thing that really matters.

What you are passionate about will become your kids' passion. Your beliefs and practices will become theirs. I believe that is why God gave us verses 7-9. God tells us to *diligently* teach our children. That is we are to consistently and continually put the Word of God before them.

When you talk, what is the object of your conversations? When you're at home, who is the focus? How do you use bedtime? Is the focus on the Lord? In the mornings, what is your routine?

The picture from Deuteronomy 6 is that parenting is a full-time job. It is a life-long responsibility, whereby you are always mentoring, teaching, and coaching your children. You are modeling how to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and strength. This is your calling as a parent.

Practical suggestions:

- Pray for and with them daily.
- Teach them to spend time with God daily.
- Lead them to faith in Jesus.
- Teach them the priority of being with the church.

We run from game to tournament to exhibition to competition, all in the name of family – and all the while neglecting the rightful place of God and His church and kingdom.

2. Open Your Heart to Your Children

As a parent do you have regrets? Are there things that you wish you had done or had not done when your kids were younger? Perhaps for some, you regret the emotional distance that you allowed to grow between you and your children or you and your parents. You regret not fully opening your hearts to them.

What is done is done. You can't change the past, but you can make sure the future does not repeat the past. You can choose to open your heart to your children. Here are some ways to do that:

A. Show Affection

Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. – Ps 127:3

Your children are God's gift to you. He has entrusted you with the awesome responsibility of loving them. Showing affection means you look for ways to show your children how delighted you feel that God has put them in your life. Too many parents act like their children are nothing more than a disruption in their lives. God help you if that is the way you view your kids.

Parenting is no easy task, and you're always on the clock. Because of that it is easy for our hearts to close off. We must work to keep our hearts open to our children. Paul illustrates for us what it means to open our hearts. The Corinthian believers had caused Paul all kinds of trouble. They sparred with one another, formed exclusive cliques, neglected those who needed help, slandered Paul, and endorsed the most repulsive sins imaginable. Yet rather than blasting the Corinthians, Paul declared his affection for them.

Read 2 Cor 6:11-13.

Paul loved these believers despite their behavior. He never closed his heart to them even though that would have been easy to do.

B. Listen Good

One great way to open your heart is to listen. Being a good listener takes a lot of work. It doesn't usually come natural.

In regards to listening one mother said, "To be a good listener, you must want to hear what your child has to say. You have to believe that your youngster's thoughts and feelings are important, and that he gains tremendous benefits from your listening."

Do you know what your kids want from you more than anything else? They want you to listen and understand them.

It will take a lot of work to learn how to understand them. It will take a lot of listening.

C. Communicate

Communication is the key to any relationship, and it is true with your children. Open your heart to your children by sharing with them what is important to you. Talk to them about what is going on in your life. Encourage conversation. Talk to them about the Lord, but also talk to them about everything else such as:

- Being a kid
- School
- Friends
- Money
- Drugs and alcohol
- Sex
- Parenting
- Life

Work hard to create an environment in which your children feel safe to talk about what is on their hearts. They should never feel like they can't talk to you about an issue.

Open your heart to your children. Be affectionate with them. Dads hug your kids. Date your daughters. Make them feel special. Take your sons on overnight trips. Listen to your children. Get involved in their world. Talk with them about what's going on at school and what is happening at your work. You get one shot at parenting. Make it count. Will you make mistakes? Sure.

Conclusion: Parenting is modeling. I saw this fleshed out in a real way during our basketball camp in Barcelona this past week. We could not speak Spanish, so we could not communicate effectively with words to the campers. Fortunately, we had translators who interpreted for them what we said. But our most effective form of communication was our demonstrations. We explained the drill in English. It was interpreted in Spanish. Then we modeled it in action for them

to see. That is what it means to be a parent. Parenting is modeling before your children what it means to be one who walks with God. Dads and moms, grandpas and grandmas, what are you modeling before your children and grandchildren?