

## Gospel-Centered Parenting

By Chris Taylor

When considering what the Bible has to say about parenting, most quickly turn to **Proverbs 22:6<sup>1</sup>** or **Deuteronomy 7:6-7<sup>2</sup>**, which we will look at shortly. However, the paradigm for Gospel-centered parenting must begin with **Genesis 1**. Here is where God's grand story begins. Here is where we see *God's people, in God's place, under God's rule*.<sup>3</sup> **Genesis 1:26-28** reads: <sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..."

In the opening chapters of Genesis, God is seen ruling over His creation! His commission for His image-bearers, Adam and Eve, is for them *to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth*. At the heart of this commission is the call to reproduce for divine reflection, specifically to have children that would reflect God's rule as His image-bearers. Essentially, God is saying: *Have more children to reflect my glory as they live out my creative purpose for them*. God's purpose for humanity was to spread God's glory as His image-bearers. Adam and Eve and their offspring were to rule over God's good creation, and through their rule reflect God's sovereign rule over all things! With this, Adam and Eve and their offspring were to follow God's Word as God's people in the context of a relationship with God. This was forfeited at the *Fall* when Adam and Eve sought to usurp God's position as King.<sup>4</sup> Think of it this way: God's purpose for parenting is for parents to foster in their children an awareness of God and His creative purpose for their lives. That purpose is to live in obedience to His Word, to enjoy Him through relationship, and to seek His glory in all things! Obedience, relationship, and glory! Thankfully, what was lost at the *Fall* has been restored in the Gospel.

In this paper, we will look at four things: **(1) The Call to Gospel-centered parenting; (2) The Model for Gospel-centered parenting; (3) The Means for Gospel-centered parenting; (4) The Goal of Gospel-centered parenting**. In **Part 1—The Call**—we will look at numerous passages that spell out God's design for Gospel-centered parenting and what it entails. In **Part 2—The Model**—we will look at God's example of caring and providing for His children (God's people) throughout Scripture. Christian parents are called to emulate God's fatherly care toward their children. In **Part 3—the Means**—we will look at the power of the Gospel, God's gift of the Spirit to enable parents to live out and embrace their

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<sup>1</sup> Train up a child in the way he should go;  
even when he is old he will not depart from it.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

<sup>3</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Son of God and the New Creation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 58.

<sup>4</sup> See Genesis 3:5

call to do Gospel-centered parenting, and the necessity of God's church to do this well. In **Part 4—The Purpose**—we will unpack the purpose of Gospel-centered parenting and what it aims to accomplish.

### **Part 1 – The Call to Gospel-Centered Parenting**

As seen above, the call to Gospel-centered parenting begins in **Genesis 1:26-28**, where God calls Adam and Eve to have children that will obey His Word, enjoy Him in relationship, and seek His glory in all things! All of this is implied in humanity's image-of-God bearing status! God's creative purpose for Adam and Eve was to be passed on to their offspring. Simply put, Adam and Eve, and their children, were called to *know God and make Him known*. The two ideas here are *relationship* and *representation*. As Christians, we have been rescued to know God in relationship and to represent Him through our words and deeds. As Christian parents, we must seek to point our children to these two paramount pursuits—knowing God and making Him known. There is nothing more important than this! This is God's call for parents throughout Scripture. And as we'll see with the passages below, the way we do this is by teaching our children the Word, and more specifically, the central focus of the Word—the Gospel! This makes perfect sense due to the fact that God has chosen to reveal Himself through His Word! If we desire for our children to know God and make Him known, then we must teach them the Word!

**Deuteronomy 6:4-7** – <sup>4</sup>“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

In vv. 4-5 we see that the God who entered into a covenant relationship with Israel for the salvation of the nations (Genesis 12:1-3) is the one true God. He alone is the Creator! We should love this one God with every fiber of our being. These words should be internalized by God's people and should therefore transform how we live our lives! Furthermore, this message of revelation (one God) and response (love Him) **MUST** be passed on to our children. In vs. 7, the Lord instructs His people to teach this message *diligently* to their children, and to do so constantly. The Hebrew verb translated as *diligently* (*shanan*) denotes the idea of saying something again and again (repetition). That's the image conveyed by the numerous activities (e.g., sit, lie down, walk, rise) and contexts (e.g., in your house, by the way) mentioned. Parents must be committed to teaching their children God's Word on a regular and consistent basis. It's of monumental importance!

I am thankful for Christ-centered youth groups and programs like Awana, that are committed to teaching young people the Word, and where volunteers come alongside them to disciple them in the teachings of Jesus. However, these should never take the place of what all Christian parents are called to do. As a former youth pastor, I met far too many Christian parents who viewed the youth group as the primary discipling tool in the life of their students. They couldn't have been more wrong. As seen in passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-7 and Ephesians 6:1-4, parents are to be the primary disciplers of their children (in the context of the local church), and programs like Awana and church youth groups are meant to supplement and support.

A great place for parents to start is by simply reading the Bible to their children every night at bedtime. At the end of this paper I will provide a list of helpful resources (e.g., children's bibles and books on bible doctrine) for parents to read with their children. Also, encourage your children to start

memorizing our weekly bible verse at MCC. Do this with them. Practice praying God's Word with them. Look for opportunities throughout the day to talk to them about Jesus: who He is, what He's done and why it matters.

**Proverbs 22:6** – Train up a child in the way he should go;  
even when he is old he will not depart from it.

The verb "to train" carries the idea of *dedication*. Parents must dedicate their children to the way of the Lord! But how? What should their training regimen consist of? The Word of God. How are we meant to understand the second half of the first line? The ESV reads, "*in the way he should go.*" The NRSV reads, "*in the right way.*" The Hebrew literally reads, "*in accordance with his way.*" Because the book of Proverbs equates the way of wisdom with the way of the Lord, it is probably best to take "*his way*" as referring to *God's way*. As parents, we are called to train up our children according to the way of the Lord, which is revealed in His Word! What might this look like? In the Israelite family structure, parents imparted God's truth (His way through His Word) through conversation, example and imitation.<sup>5</sup> Use the dinner table and car rides, for example, to discuss God's truth (e.g., God is Creator, Judge and Savior).<sup>6</sup> Like Paul, invite your children to follow you as you follow Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1)! Exemplify the Christian life before your children. Let them consistently see the Gospel lived out in your own life by your actions and words. Memorize Scripture with your children. Pray in front of your children<sup>7</sup> and with your children; teach them to rely on God, by showing them that mommy and daddy rely on God (as modeled through prayer). Pray God's Word with your children. Use story-telling! As parents we must be committed to telling our children the grand story of God's Word, the story of redemption, the story of rescue culminating in Jesus! The best way to prepare our children for a life of godliness is by training them in the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), for that is where the way of wisdom leads! The way of wisdom is paved by the Word of God! The intended outcome of this training is that our children will continue in God's truth, holding fast to it, evidenced by a commitment to know Him and make Him known!

We must be careful when reading Proverbs. Proverbs are not laws or promises, but rather general principles. For example, with our passage it is generally true that families who commit to teaching their children the Word of God will, as a result, see children committed to walking with the Lord. However, there are exceptions. I've known godly parents who have faithfully taught and exemplified the Gospel to their children, and yet a child from that family departed from the Lord. This verse is not to be read as a guaranteed recipe for producing godly children, but a godly principle to be practiced that *tends* to result in this outcome. Salvation, from start to finish, is the Lord's work! Either way, this is wisdom! All parents should strive to do what is being instructed in this verse.

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

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<sup>5</sup> *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 993.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Stuart, one of my Hebrew professors at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, read a Proverb with his wife and children over dinner every evening. The family would discuss the Proverb, namely what it meant, and how it might be applied. This is a wonderful practice!

<sup>7</sup> New Testament scholar, D.A. Carson, tells the story of how as a child he remembers waking up every morning to his father praying to God in one of the rooms of their home for at least 45 minutes. This was an everyday occurrence. What a legacy! May all of our children have this memory of us!

In the imperative section of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul commands fathers to do two things in response to the Gospel. Gospel-centered parenting flows out of the Gospel; it is our response to the Gospel!

- (1) **Do not provoke your children to anger** – Fathers will succeed in provoking their children to anger if they fail to consistently exemplify the character of Christ, the fruit of the Spirit. If fathers speak damaging and hurtful words, are prone to bitterness and wrath and anger, and lack kindness with their children (Eph. 4:29-31), then this will certainly lead to their children being provoked to anger. The best way for fathers to prevent this provocation is to put on the character of Christ, and love their children the way they've been loved by God in Christ Jesus.
- (2) **Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord** – The verb “to bring up” means to nourish or to bring up from childhood; it denotes loving care, holistic care. The phrase, the discipline and instruction of the Lord refers to belief and behavior surrounding the Lord. As parents, we must be committed to teaching our children (and modeling before them) orthodoxy (right believing) and orthopraxis (right living) in light of the Gospel.

Taken together (#1 and #2), Paul is instructing fathers to embody the Gospel, teach the content of the Gospel and teach what it means to live in light of the Gospel to their children! What a privilege! Again, the reason we do this is because we desire to see our children knowing God and making Him known. Because of the Gospel, Jesus' saving work in our place, we (sinful humanity) can once again know God and make Him known. Humanity's purpose has been restored in Christ, the purpose of serving God in relationship! Again, where must we go to point our children to God's purpose restored? As seen with all three passages above, parents must look to the Word for Gospel-centered parenting. Gospel-centered parenting cannot be done apart from the Word. So the question is this: How are you regularly incorporating God's Word into the lives of your children? Knowing what to do and how to do it, although related, are two different things. So, how do we parent well with the Word?

## Part II – The Model

Throughout Scripture God is described as a Father, and His people, as His children (e.g., Exodus 4:22-23; Psalm 103:13; Proverbs 3:11-12; Jeremiah 3:19; John 1:12; Romans 8:14; 2 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 3:26). In fact, because of the Son of God's saving work on our behalf, and our faith in Him, we can now relate to God as Father (Romans 8:14-17)! What does it mean that God is our Father and how does this help us in our call to do Gospel-centered parenting? Let's look at several examples from Scripture where God relates to His people as children, and then make some observations.

**Psalm 103:13** – As a father shows compassion to his children,  
so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

The fact that God calls His people His children is remarkable. This alone should transform the way Christian fathers view fatherhood. We have the most amazing example of fatherhood in our heavenly Father! What does this verse teach us regarding Gospel-centered parenting? As our heavenly Father has been compassionate toward us, His children, we must be compassionate toward our children, and so put the character of God on display. Fathers, how often do you ask the question, “Does the way I father my sons and daughters put the character of my heavenly Father on display?” The word “compassion” used here denotes love, grace and kindness. God's compassion toward His people is seen in the way He provides for them, cares for them, protects them and serves them. May we as fathers

and mothers imitate the Father's love and grace toward our children, and so put His beautiful character on display for our children to see!

**Proverbs 3:11-12** – <sup>11</sup>My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline  
or be weary of his reproof,  
<sup>12</sup>for the Lord reproves him whom he loves,  
as a father the son in whom he delights.

The comparison made here is between the heavenly Father's discipline toward his children and a father's discipline toward his son. Discipline is often placed in a negative light (especially from the child's perspective and culture), and yet here, the Lord instructs His people to not despise the Lord's discipline. Why? Because God's love grounds his discipline (vs. 12). His discipline is an expression of His love. The writer of Hebrews quotes Proverbs 3:11-12 in Hebrews 12, and adds "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later *it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness* to those who have been trained by it" (vs. 11). The wisdom of discipline is seen in the fruit it produces. As seen in Hebrews 12:11, this includes the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Right living, which we've defined as knowing God and making Him known, a life characterized by relationship, obedience and glory, is what Gospel-centered parenting seeks to produce. God disciplines His children with this end in view, and thus so should we. When children spurn the good instruction of God's Word, it presents parents with the opportunity to teach their children about sin, its consequences, and the grace and love of God. How so? For example, when my three year old (Clark) knowingly disobeys God's Word, I see it as an opportunity to point him to his need for Jesus. He may throw a fit or yell at Haley. Of course there are consequences to his actions, whether a spanking or time out—for these are part and parcel of the discipline process, but I should never leave it at that. I quickly take him aside and let him know that his actions are not ok, because God has told us that these particular actions are not ok in His Bible. I then define his disobedience as sin. This is the bad news. It hurts God's heart. It's not enough to simply label our children's disobedient action as wrong or bad, and then fail to talk about it in light of God's Word. This second thing is the most important! We must quickly follow up our discipline (e.g., spanking or time out) with the Gospel. I talk to Clark about Jesus and His ability to forgive our sin because of what He did on the Cross for us. I tell Clark that Jesus is able to forgive our sins and that we should ask him both for forgiveness and the help needed to follow Him and obey mommy and daddy. Discipline is one of the most important things we can do as parents, for by doing it we are making our children aware of those things that are contrary to God's Word, things that will inevitably lead to destruction and separation from God! We then simultaneously hold up to them the better way, the way of the Lord—the way of righteousness, ultimately the way of Jesus. You see, discipline has eternal value, when done right! This is true whether or not your children have placed their trust in Jesus Christ. If we wish to imitate the Fatherly love of God toward His children, then we must be committed to disciplining our children.

**Matthew 7:7-11** – <sup>7</sup>"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup>Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup>If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

In this final passage we see that as a father knows how to give good gifts to his children, so too our Heavenly Father, in a much greater way, knows how to give good gifts to His children. Our Heavenly Father is benevolent and generous and longs to give good gifts to His children (James 1:17). This is seen in how He has provided for all of our needs, from the physical (e.g., bread, rain, life)<sup>8</sup> to the spiritual (e.g., His Son, the Spirit)<sup>9</sup>. We too, then, must be generous toward our children if we are to imitate the Father. This is not a call to spoil our children with unwise spending on things void of Gospel value. Rather, it is a call to give good things to your children, things needed for life and godliness, for that is how the Father gives to us, His children (2 Peter 1:3). Parents need to provide their children with food, clothing and shelter. These are necessities, that when provided in love, reflect God's fatherly heart toward His people. But the most important thing we can give our children is the Word of God, because in the Word is revealed the story of the Son!

The greatest way the Father has loved us is by giving us His Son! The greatest way we can love our children is by giving them the Son, namely by telling them the story of Jesus—His life, death and resurrection! Read the Word with your children; study it with them; memorize it with them; take them to church every Sunday so that they can hear the Word with you! This is surely the greatest gift we can give our children! In Genesis 22 God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son of promise—Isaac. At the climactic moment, as Abraham has his knife raised, God provides a substitute, a ram for sacrifice. This story serves as a beautiful pointer to the Father's provision of the Lamb of God, His very own Son. Fathers, mothers and their children alike deserve Jesus' fate! We deserve death and separation because of our sin. Thankfully, like in the case of Abraham, a substitute has been provided. We must tell our children this story, this good news which appears in both testaments and in every book of the Bible! The Bible is the story of Jesus Christ, and every page looks ahead to His life, death and resurrection as God's saving solution for sinful humanity! Again, the greatest way we can love our sons and daughters is by giving them the Son, by pointing them to Jesus!

### **Part III – The Means**

Hopefully now we have a better idea of what Gospel-centered parenting entails. However, many reading this may still feel that the task itself is simply beyond them, an unachievable goal—one that cannot be done. Praise be to God that this is not the case! The Gospel is not good news only due to the fact that it provides forgiveness, but because it provides power for the forgiven, the power to live for Jesus as His new creation people (Ezekiel 36:25-27). Because of the Gospel we must parent with purpose! We must seek to raise our children in the Word, constantly pointing them to the all-sufficient Savior and glorious King—Jesus Christ! We must do this through our words and actions, but how? How do we do this? What help does God give His people, specifically parents, for obeying God's call to do Gospel-centered parenting?

### **The Gospel**

We must start with the Gospel. The Gospel is the good news surrounding the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as God's gracious provision to the sin and separation-from-God problem affecting all of humanity. As I've said before, the Gospel is the good news of *Jesus in our place, by His grace, to bring us into His space!* As Scripture tells us time and time again, Jesus took our place at the

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<sup>8</sup> See Matthew 6:11; Matthew 5:45; Acts 17:25

<sup>9</sup> See John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Luke 11:13; John 14:16

Cross (Isa. 53:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18). He took the punishment our sin deserved, satisfying God's wrath against our sin; He did this willfully and in love, with the goal of bringing us back into fellowship with God! By trusting in Jesus and turning from our sin we are brought from death to life (Eph. 2:1-10). Our hearts are transformed by the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, our sins are forgiven, and we are given a new identity—children of God (Romans 8:14-17)! Without the Gospel, Gospel-centered parenting simply cannot happen. Until we, by God's grace, respond to the Gospel, we are still under the curse of sin, death and the wrath of God! The Gospel is God's gracious means of bringing us back into fellowship with Himself, restoring His image in us and renewing His vocation for us to live as His people on mission. A major part of this mission pertains to our role as Christian parents. We seek to be fruitful and multiply and raise children who love Jesus and His church, and then send them out in the world to participate in God's mission of making disciples! If the goal of Gospel-centered parenting is to point our children to the Gospel, then we must first be transformed by the Gospel. Because the Gospel is God's means of making us alive (spiritually), we who are alive are now able to respond to God's commands and live as His people. Because of the Gospel, we can parent knowing that the curse of sin and death has been broken in our lives (we're alive), that we have a heavenly Father who is for us and now calls us His own due to our union with Christ (His Son), and we have a new heart and thus new desires to accomplish our new mission as God's people! But it doesn't stop there! He gives us a Helper!

### **The Holy Spirit**

As seen in the gospels, Jesus' mission launches at His baptism, and specifically when the Holy Spirit descends on Him. The Spirit marked Jesus as the Messiah (Isaiah 42:1; 61:1; Luke 3:22) and empowered Him for His messianic ministry. Luke 4:1 reads, "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was *led* by the Spirit in the wilderness..." This same Spirit that guided Christ during His earthly ministry is given to God's church to guide and empower them to live as God's light-of-the-world people. The Spirit's role is to empower God's people to live out the Gospel in every aspect of their lives. Ephesians 5:18 reads, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, *but be filled with the Spirit...*" As alcohol, when abused, has the ability to control a person, influencing and altering their behavior toward wickedness, so too the Spirit has the power to control God's church and empower His people to live in light of the Gospel. Paul is saying, "Be controlled by the Spirit," and then he points us to the primary relationships where the Spirit works to empower God's people to live out the Gospel (e.g., the church, marriage, children and parents and the work place).<sup>10</sup> God gives us the Spirit to live like Christ in all of our relationships! Parents, be sure to pray for the Spirit's power in your parenting. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the strength to love and serve your children, even when it's hard! Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom in your parenting and opportunities to point your children to the Gospel! As parents, we must lean into the Spirit as we seek to bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. To try and do Gospel-centered parenting without the Spirit's power is a fool's errand.

### **The Church**

Far too many parents in the church fail to turn to one of God's greatest provisions of grace for His people—the church! Because our children represent us, many parents privatize parenting, and

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<sup>10</sup> The church (Ephesians 5:19-21); Marriage (Ephesians 5:22-33); Children and Parents (Ephesians 6:1-4); The Work Place (Ephesians 6:5-9)

refuse to share their pains, struggles and challenges in parenting with their brothers and sisters in Christ, for fear of how they might be viewed. The thinking goes like this: If I'm perceived as failing in my parenting, then I'm a failure. To fail to share one's struggles and challenges in parenting with the family of God is to fail to take advantage of one of God's greatest resources. Furthermore, it's dishonest. When asked most recently, "How are your kids doing," how did you respond? "Oh, everyone is great! The kids are great! No worries!" Really?!?! No struggles? Let's be real with one another, and view the church as what it is—God's family committed to our sanctification. Hebrews 10:24-25 reads, "<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." The church, God's gathered people, is God's context for His people to stir up one another to love and good works! How often do we need this as parents, especially for a brother or sister in Christ to come alongside us and say, "I've been there as a parent! It's hard! May I pray for you? Here's the verse or passage of Scripture that helped me get through this." The church also provides us with accountability. I don't know about you, but I need brothers in Christ to come alongside me and to challenge me as a father, to ask me on a regular basis how I'm doing in discipling my children and to regularly pray for me. Let's not kid ourselves here; we all need this! As a church we are called to come alongside one another to spur each other on toward Christ Jesus! Our goal is to see the Gospel on display in our congregation in the way we love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ; in our marriages; and in our parent-child relationships! Because we all desire this, we must all work to see this come to fruition! Because we care about the reputation of Christ, which is directly tied to Christ's body, the church, we must endeavor to help one another live out the Gospel in all of our relationships. In order to do this, we must invest in each other's lives. There must be transparency, and a willingness to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). If you find yourselves struggling as parents, quickly reach out to your brothers and sisters for prayer. Ask for Godly counsel! Pray together for God's wisdom to help you lead better as parents and pray for the Spirit to work on the hearts of your children. One of the key ways the church functions as the church (biblically) is when its members gather together in prayer (Acts 2:42; James 5:13-17).

### **The Purpose**

What is the purpose in all of this? Why Gospel-centered parenting? The purpose is three-fold: (1) Obedience to Christ; (2) The pursuit of His glory; (3) The salvation of our children! His Word says to do it, so we do it! When we do it, we obey and put His fatherly love on display, and therefore He is honored and glorified! Lastly, we do it with the goal of seeing our children transformed by the Gospel, and thus committed to obeying God's Word, enjoying a relationship with Him, and seeking His glory! I cannot think of anything giving me more joy than hearing my boys say, "Daddy, I want to follow Jesus! I believe that He died for my sins and rose again, and I need His forgiveness. I am so thankful for what He's done and want to live for Him." I long to hear those words from my children, and pray daily that one day I will. Until then (and even after, God willing), Haley and I will commit to proclaiming and living out the Gospel before our children!

### **A brief word on authority**

A fourth purpose of Gospel-centered parenting is to teach our children the importance of authority. Authority is important, because it is part of God's design for our lives. Submission to authority is biblical. The Son submits to the Father (John 6:38; Mark 14:36). The church submits to

Christ (Eph. 5:24). Wives submit to husbands (Eph. 5:22). Children submit to their parents (Eph. 6:1-3). Christians submit to governing authorities (Rom. 13:1). In fact, Christians are called to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21). What is the primary purpose of authority? All authority comes from God; all authority is meant to reflect God; therefore, all authority is meant to point us to God! By teaching our children to submit to our authority as their parents and to obey—and by requiring it—we are preparing our children to respond appropriately to the Gospel, for the Gospel demands our obedience! In John 14:21 Jesus says, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.” John Piper writes, “It is part of our job — to teach children the glory of a happy, submissive spirit to authorities that God has put in place. Parents represent God to small children, and it is deadly to train children to ignore the commands of God.”<sup>11</sup> Parents, remember that your authority over your children is a stewardship of grace, one intended to put the loving, compassionate, holy and benevolent authority of the Father on display for your children to see.

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<sup>11</sup> John Piper, “Parents, Require Obedience of Your Children,” <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/parents-require-obedience-of-your-children>, (October 29, 2013).

## Helpful Tools and Resources for Parents

### Children's Bibles

- DeYoung, Kevin. *The Biggest Story: How the Snake Crusher Brings us Back to the Garden*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015.
- Helm, R. David. *The Big Picture Story Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2004.
- Lloyd-Jones, Sally and Jago. *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

### Books on Bible Doctrine for Children

- DeYoung, Kevin and Don Clark. *The Biggest Story ABC*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017.
- Ferguson, B. Sinclair. *The Big Book of Questions and Answers: A Family Devotional Guide to the Christian Faith*. Fearn: CF4Kids, 2011.
- Michael, Sally. *God's Word (Making Him Known)*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2015.
- Michael, Sally. *God's Names (Making Him Known)*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2011.
- Ware, A. Bruce. *Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2009.

### Books to Read with Your Teenagers

- Bruno, Chris. *The Whole Story of the Bible in 16 Verses*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015.
- Crowe, Jaquelle. *This Changes Everything: How the Gospel Transforms the Teen Years*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017.
- DeYoung, Kevin. *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009.

### Books on Christian Parenting and Discipleship

- Baucham, Jr. Voddie. *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007.
- Baucham, Jr. Voddie. *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011.
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