

***Parents That Matter***  
Investing in Our Children  
**CTC Series: part 23**  
**PARENTING MINI-SERIES - Part A**  
**Oct 24-25**  
Ephesians 6:1-4

**Introduction**

- **Pregnancy to Death** (3 eras) - Once you receive that notification that you are pregnant, your parenting begins, and it doesn't end until either you or your child is home with the Lord. We manage God's kids for Him and that never stops while we are able to do so. What this means is that parenting is for a lifetime. Interestingly there are three common eras of parenting that are significantly different and each requires a unique set of tools. They are:
  1. **Pregnancy to Pre-Teen** - this is when you are a parent with a significant amount of control. You are shaping your child directly. They are largely dependent on you for their needs. It is a process of discovery to learn about what your child is truly like and getting a sense of what parenting style works best. It's very, very hands on and demanding of physical energy (especially boys). Though this season it's more straightforward on doing what all parents need to do, which is make sure they are safe, healthy, cared for, loved, played with, disciplined appropriately, etc.
  2. **Pre-Teen to Functioning Adult** - There is a significant shift when our kids turn 11. 11 is actually a teenager regardless of the number. The shift is predominantly that our kids are no longer entirely dependent on us for the majority of their general needs. They are now dependent on us for specific needs. This is where the emotional energy is demanded. It's more about shaping their worldview and talking them through their own self-discovery. There is a lot of boundaries and boundary testing. There're a million discussions about who they think they are or want to be. There's a lot of confusion on their part and that means we navigate a lot of mess.
  3. **Mature Adult** - This is the final shift when the parenting role goes almost entirely into an advisory capacity. You can be friends with your children and you should, but they always want to know that they can turn to you when they need advice or help. They still look for your approval and still want you to be proud of them. Even when they are parents themselves, they will use your knowledge as their foundation.
- **The Bottom line is...**

**Parenting is a LIFETIME Role**

## Lesson

- **Continuing with the Home Theme** - Paul turns his attention to the child-parent relationship.
- **Here's Our Passage for The Next Two Weekends - Ephesians 6:1-4** -  
*"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup> 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.' <sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*
  - **A Word on Being a Child That Blesses Your Parents** - I want to spend the majority of time on parenting, but we must not neglect the first part of this passage. 3 of the 4 verses are on the role of a child in the relationship.
  - **The Holy Role** - Children are supposed to be the glory of their parents and fill them with blessing. The Bible is thick with this concept.
    - **Passages and stories of honor**
  - **Why So Difficult?** - So much has been taught on and expected of kids being honoring to their parents and yet generation after generation has challenges with it. Why is that? Part of the challenge is in the human design.
  - **Designed to Launch (babies to adults & rocket fuel)** - the very concept of human development is to grow to be self-sustaining. Babies start entirely dependent but as they grow into adulthood everything about them is supposed to be able to stand on their own and start contributing to others. But this inherently demands a catalyzing factor, a launch code. Just like the rocket boosting at Cape Canaveral launching a vehicle into space, the intensity must be great to create the lift it needs. In the same way God put a tension in our spirits that demands to grow up and anything that hinders that is resisted in order to gain traction.
  - **It starts with a bond and ends with a push (difficult adjustment)** - It's quite an adjustment as kids start by dependently bonding and adhering to their parents and then slowly through the pre-teen and teen years, it starts to push apart. This is on purpose. The resistance you feel from your child is what you are going to rely on at night when they are out with their friends. You are hoping that the strong will they demonstrate will also be present when they are in peer pressure situations. Right?
  - **In the Tension, Keep Blessing** - the goal is to bless DURING the tension. Recognizing that its happening and its happening on purpose and that its good, should give us some freedom and health to strategize the best way for us to deal with it and react to one another.

- **Kids** - your parents are going to irritate you. They aren't trying to, but it will feel like that. Keep in mind that it's healthy and helpful. Do your best to trust the process.
- **God Holds us Accountable for Our Roles** - kids, God expects your parents to be able to see your walk with God and your transformation just as much as your friends. They will be the most difficult crowd to convince because they see you every day and the nature of the relationship, but you don't get to be a Christian and sweet to everyone else and be terrible to your parents. They still count.
- **What God's Word Says** - Scripture just listed 3 important truths, 2 of them are commands and one is a promise:
  1. **Obey Your Parents** - bottom line they outrank you and they will be held accountable by God for how things go in their household. Their responsibility before God is parenting you well. You can make their job harder or easier, but regardless God will hold you accountable for obeying their authority even when it doesn't make sense.
    - **Seismic Shift** (adviser) - there will come a day when you are no longer required to obey their every word, when you are an adult. Their role shifts to an adviser. But until that day, they are calling the shots.
  2. **Honor Your Parents** - honor means to treat someone with admiration and respect and give special recognition. We are called to treat our parents well and make them shine. We are a walking trophy for them. Either our label says, "1<sup>st</sup> place" and they put it on the mantle, or it simply says, 'Participant' and they put it in the garage storage.
    - **Bishop & Brideway's Example** - Lady Di's parents live with them and they care for all their needs. So many of you do the same. It's really, really difficult and time consuming to be a caregiver. For those that do it for your parents, may you be blessed since you are being a blessing to them.
  3. **That It Will Go Well with You (why? Stoning, blessing or max success?)** - there is no explanation on how or why specifically this promise will be fulfilled. It just says that if you honor your parents, "*it will go well with you and that you will live long in the land.*" Does that mean that you won't be stoned alive for disobedience like in the ancient Jewish world? Or does it mean that God will put an extra blessing on you for putting them before yourself? Or does it mean that when you obey and honor your parents you maximize your learning and

development so that you are more successful in life? I would guess the answer is:.....YES.

- **And Now to Parenting** - I have two last parts for you: A.) what God's word says, B.) some practical parenting wisdom.
- **Ephesians 6:4** - *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*
- **Fathers** - I find it interesting that in an ancient culture that had significant separation between what women and men did, and how women ran the domestic side of society, including most of the parenting, that Paul (actually the Lord through Paul), addresses dads and not moms. Is it possible that since women weren't always included in these teaching sessions yet, that it was mostly men so they were addressed? Not really, wives were just addressed a moment earlier in the passage. So, why Fathers and not mothers? Paul tends to highlight areas of need that are being neglected and Christian people for moms to be involved with the kids actively. The challenge was keeping the dads engaged.
- **3 Biblical Advice Pieces for Ancient Dads** - remember the rules of interpreting the Bible: there is one intended meaning by the author but many ways that can apply to our lives. Paul was talking in an ancient Middle Eastern context here and it meant something specific to him and the audience. To us it may seem too simple, but think about how they received it and then adjust it for what God may be saying to us dads today. But here's what Paul said:
  1. **It's Not a Battle** (*do not provoke them to anger*) - sometimes when men don't have a lot of tools to handle a situation, they default to what they do have and how they normally do things. Like it's been said, 'to someone with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.' In the same way, if a man was never raised around kids, doesn't understand kids and sees a child resisting them, they may default to a battle-stance and dig in. That would mean that they shift into a mode of 'shutting the opponent down, however necessary.' This is unhealthy and can be very damaging. Your kids aren't your opponents. They are your treasure. They are your projects. They are your blessings. They are your legacy. You want the best for them. You want them to thrive. They aren't your problem; they are your joy. But they must be tended, shaped, guided, loved, cherished, taught and formed into their potential. Remember, their resistance to you helps them get traction in life.

2. **Properly Discipline** – *bring them up in the DISCIPLINE of the Lord* – (what they need) – It is equally unloving to abuse a child as neglect. In the middle means that you are doing your best to make sure they have everything they need. That includes boundaries and safeguards as well as fun, laughter, love and affirming. It means that instead of lashing out at your kids, you find a way to develop them in a manner that they can understand and receive. Discipline in a home is different than discipline in the military. Discipline in the home means guidance and instruction and accountability, not barking orders and executing punishments. It says that we are bringing up our children with 'discipline IN THE LORD'. That means its Godly discipline, godly training, correcting and guiding with godly wisdom. It's not just what you received as a child, or simply what you read in a book. It's seeking God's heart and will on how to properly direct your kids.
3. **Instruct Them** – *bring them up in the INSTRUCTION of the Lord* – (help them stand on your spiritual shoulders, not just mom) – It is not your wife's job, or their mom's job alone to make sure they know the Lord deeply, that's your role as well. You are role modeling their faith in the Lord just as much as your spouse. Kids look to both of their parents for what Christianity looks like. Too often the dad is doing his own thing and the child sees that and grows up not taking Christianity seriously. It is rare that a child sees both parents healthy and vibrant with the Lord through their life and doesn't have a high appreciation for the Lord and follow Him themselves (it happens but its rare – usually only one parent is tight with God).
  - **They can't go higher than you until they are firmly where you are** – it's common for men to simply hope and want their kids to have a better spiritual life than they do. But it doesn't magically happen. It has to be developed. You are part of that development project. They need to see your best and then they can move on to higher heights. You can't just get out of their way and assume they will surpass you.
  - **The Best Instruction is Along the Way** – Christianity is designed on the apprentice model where we live life out in front of someone in a role modeling and training sense. It's not mere academics or lectures. Christian Parenting is the same way. We live life with our kids and show them even more than tell them what's right and good. Don't be daunted by the belief that you have to sit your kids down and do a Bible study with them or

preach to them. That can be awkward and unhelpful if done wrong. It's far better to live a vibrant life with Jesus along with your kids and tell them why along the way.

- **And Now Parenting Wisdom from the Hahn Household** - you can take it or leave it. It's not gospel fact. It's practical wisdom learned through the years.
  - **Suzi's Parenting** - You may never get to see and hear Suzi for yourself up here on a stage. She is deathly afraid of public speaking, but make no mistake, she has lots to say. In my book, she is the best mom I have ever observed. She has made our girls her everything and done an extraordinary job. So, I sat down with her on a couple different occasions and interviewed her and discussed how we have parented our daughters through the years.
  - **6 Game Changers** - We gleaned 6 concepts that were game changers for us. Some we learned from other parents, some from books, some we discovered and some God dropped in our lap. We are not perfect parents and we don't have perfect kids, but they are healthy, joyful, vibrant and love the Lord. Every family has things that work for their family and things that don't. Here's some of ours:
    1. **Be Present and Available** - more than anything this is critical.
      - **Wacky Schedules** - Kids don't know what they need, and they don't emotionally fit into schedules. They will want to open up at the most inopportune time. It's late night downloads and last-minute deep questions. Sometimes it's going to feel like you are getting played since they don't want to go to bed, and honestly you might be, but use that to your advantage while you can.
      - **Their timing or no timing** - If you shut them down, they will mark that in their mind and stop coming. You only get so many chances to build a reality of connection.
      - **As Much Focus as Possible** - It's the reason why Suzi stayed home with our kids and I worked (which was harder financially but a decision we felt called to make. That is not an option for single parents, nor for lower income households). Unfortunately, there is always a cost paid by our children when they are not around parents, especially in the early years. Sometimes we have to pay that cost due to limitations of life. I grew up in a single parent home where my mom did everything in her power. I still felt the result.
      - **Unique Communication Styles** - every child is unique. Each child has a personality type and communication style. Learning the nuances of your child's style is critical. When do they want to talk? How do they open up?

What's their most alert or most tired hours of the day? What's their life rhythms? How do they share their feelings? Are they cautious, suspicious, hesitant, forthright, talkative, loud, what? It's useless to demand that they match your communication rhythms, they will just clam up and move on. Many kids are skittish about talking with their parents, so you have to be sensitive to that and work with it.

- **Emergencies** - When things hit the fan with your kids (break ups, friend problems, injuries, failed tests, nightmares, sickness, etc.), it's all hands on deck. This means you as parents drop whatever you are doing and focus on the child, at least at first to find out what's really going on and then you can adjust. Over time you will be able to hone in your responses. Some kids are prone to drama and everything is an emergency (usually that is a craving for attention), but other kids never seem to reveal emergencies (could be a lack of trust, or private nature). Cut out any unnecessary stuff in your life to focus on this moment (intercession and parenting). It's on repeat until the season is over (intentional parenting). This could be a season and not just a day.
- **Media Device Obstacles** - Laptops, Cell phones and TV are communication obstacles. You may feel entirely free to be approached, but it's about how its perceived by your kids. If they have a hesitation to talk about something personal and see that you are "busy" in their minds, they will move on and not bring it up. If you are on a device and they come into the room, set it down or shut it, or mute it and winsomely ask if they needed something.
- **Some Left for Home** - one of the things that I struggle with is that my job is emotionally exhausting. By the time I'm done working in ministry for the day, I'm wiped out. Living 30 minutes from church allowed me to decompress from tension but didn't really alleviate the tiredness. So, when the girls wanted to talk, sometimes I wasn't emotionally free. That's hard. In a perfect world, you keep some in the tank through the day so there's some emotional space to be present when you get home. Don't spend it all on strangers.

**2. Give the reason behind the NO answer** - Early in our parenting years, here at church we met a wonderful couple with four kids: Steve and Jaime Scott. They were terrific and very engaged parents. One day, Jamie and Suzi got to talking and she gave us one of our greatest hints to parenting: Always give your kids the moral reason behind your rules. If you try to parent with a 'because I told you so', it will only guide them when you are

physically present. But if it's truly important you want them to follow your boundary even when you aren't with them. They need to know why. They may not agree with it, they may argue it, but it has to have a logical reason. If you have no reason, then either it's a bad rule, or you aren't looking deep enough into why it's important to you.

- **Show them the Gray** - when an issue is not black and white (clear and obvious), show them the gray. Show them why it's messy and how you see it. Show them how some parts are good and some parts are bad. Teach them to be critical thinkers so they can operate when you aren't there. Give them all the information applicable and appropriate. Sometimes you have to hold back some information and take the hits out of concern for them or someone else, that's part of being a parent and leader. But most of the time you can walk them through it.
- **Example (Music)** - Why you don't want them to listen to that one song and play it in their room. They will immediately think that you just don't get it, that it's not the big of a deal and that you are just old and out of touch. So, you need to explain it to them and why it's not healthy. Maybe you explain why the subject matter is actually teaching them a different mindset. Maybe you talk about the impact of that type of language on people around you. Maybe you talk about the lifestyle of that artists and how we become what we worship. Maybe you talk about impact on your witness for Christ. Why is it a problem for them to listen to it? If you don't know, maybe it's not a necessary boundary, or maybe you need to dig a little further in yourself.

3. **Nothing is Off Limits to talk about** - And I mean nothing. Whatever you deem inappropriate, you have been able to reason it out over time and decided for yourself that it was inappropriate. They need to have that same freedom of process. And trust me, you want to be the one to help them with that process.

- **If It's Not You, It's Someone Else** - if they can't talk to you about it, they will talk to someone who may not have their best interest in mind. Most kids get their information about sex from porn on the internet. Most kids get information on dating from their friends. Most kids sort out their views on drugs depending on who they know who does it. Some kids find out they shouldn't be doing something illegal in the back of a police car. Are these the environments that we want out kids to be taught?
- **Warning to Prudes, and Fake-Prudes** - If you overreact, or get prudish, or embarrassed, they will shut down. They already have a few areas they



will hold back on due to their personality, don't add to it. Sometimes our reactions are merely a smokescreen to act like we are shocked. Yet, in our bedrooms we talk about all kinds of things without a blush. If you are truly embarrassed or shocked, you need to put on your game face and 'man up'.

- **To kids, silence on subjects = ignorance.** You think it's modesty to not talk about some things but they fill the quiet with the assumption you are irrelevant and can't relate. Once they deem you irrelevant, there's no point in coming to you about other issues either. Why would they want to learn from someone who doesn't know what's really going on? There's a reason why we update our encyclopedias and dictionaries in real life.
  - **It's Okay to Buy Time (only if needed)** - it's entirely appropriate to hear them out and all of their questions and ask clarifying questions, meanwhile having no clue what they are talking about nor know the answer to their questions. Then you say the phrase, 'Let me think about that some more and I'll get back to you.' Now, if they took a risk starting the conversation with you in the first place, this may be a setback so only use it when you really need to. Maybe you should remind them that you are a slow processor and that it's not the subject that's causing the delay, but your brain processing that needs a little more time. But be sure to follow back up with them as awkward as that might be.
4. **Pray them through life** - Perhaps the greatest thing you can do for your children, is pray for them. If you work for something, you get what you can do. If you pray for something, you get what God can do.
- **Praying for Breakthrough** - During tough times, your kids need real help, the kind only God can bring. That means we need to pray to bring the Kingdom of God into the situation. What I'm talking about is praying breakthrough in their lives. This is not for the timid. This is deep intercession. This is barraging heaven with prayers, sometimes that takes a while. Sometimes if it's really bad you will need to fast. This isn't a sermon on prayer so I'll refer you to our great classes on prayer to learn more.
  - **Spiritual Warfare** - Sometimes things are just not right and you'll get the sense that your kids are getting picked on by Satan and his demons. That's when you rise up in defense and fight on their behalf. This means that you are praying things off of them, away from them and breaking

strongholds. I'm talking about assaulting the gates of hell. I'm talking about calling in God's angels for back up.

- **Sickness & Pain** - Suzi and I have prayed our kiddos through almost every sickness or pain they have had. If it wasn't her, it was me. It's important that you heard a key word that I said, 'THROUGH'. I didn't say, prayed them OUT OF sickness. Sometimes that's the case and sometimes it's not. God makes the final call. You will pray for them to be healed no matter what, but many times you will need to pray for them with dogged determination over a course of time. This means praying for the fever to break, praying for the skin to close, the infection to go, the calm to come and the peace to flood in with the healing.
  - **Real Life Situations** - sometimes your prayer life is simply praying that God would be guiding them and helping them through life. You'll find yourself praying for them to find friends and to navigate friendships. Sometimes you find that you are praying them through school issues with tests and grades. Sometimes it's about a possible boyfriend or girlfriend situation. Sometimes it's just helping them establish some healthy habits or breaking bad ones. Don't rely on your parenting acumen for everything. Seek heaven for God's participation and you'll see a better return.
5. **Be Trustworthy** - It is very natural for your kids to hit an age (some earlier than others) where they are suspicious of you embarrassing them. If this happens, they will do everything in their power to limit your access to their lives and limit your exposure to their friends. We want our kids to bring their friends around our home (better there than somewhere else). We want to know our kids' friends. We want to be allowed into their lives. But if we aren't someone they can trust, they won't let us be those things.
- **See it From Their Perspective** - As our kids grow they are learning what matters and what doesn't. Heck, we are all still learning that as adults. But part of the process is sorting out how the world works, their part in it, and a big piece of that is determining what people think of them. You and I may walk through life confident or clear on who we are. They haven't got there yet. They are figuring it out and scared out of their minds that they are going to get it wrong. That may seem silly to you, but this isn't about you. It's about them. See it from their limited viewpoint and do things that make sense to them when you are interacting in their lives.

- **Have their back** - A.) Don't purposely embarrass your kids in front of others. If they can't trust you then they won't want to be around you. It may seem funny to you and it may be funny to your friends and spouse, but if it's not funny to the child, then it's not funny. They are the insecure ones, they are the nervous ones, they are the guarded ones, whether they 'should be' or not. B.) Keep confidentiality and privacy. Don't expose their secrets or weaknesses to others without their implicit approval. Don't do it for a funny story. Don't do it thinking you are bonding with other people and parents. If it's private to your child, keep it that way.

6. **You are Being Watched** - All of your lives, your kids will be watching you. They may be watching in awe, in critique or in a learning mode, but they are watching. It doesn't matter if they are toddlers, or if they are fifty-five years old. They are learning things about you and learning things about life and learning things about themselves by watching.

- **Not Just the Stuff You Want them to Hear/See** - Words - be careful of what you say, they are listening (Jill's bat ears; Joyce's fear of cats). Even when we try really hard to keep it from them, they pick up on it. Even if you whisper, even if you use body language, they are picking up on that. Sometimes you need to change your behavior or words and sometimes you just need to be aware of it (if there's nothing you can do).
- **Younger: Watching & Listening** - Kids are always watching no matter how old they are, and it can start really, really young (ex. Jill's Barbie talks in the tub repeating Suzi.). They are always growing off your example. Your issues play out in front of them (i.e. body image). But even as they grow up, not only will it teach them how to live themselves, they will naturally duplicate it with their kids, what they got from you.
- **Older: Less Control (Moral Authority)** - Let's be honest, you never have control over your kids, you only have influence. Sometimes a lot and sometimes a little. The older the kids get our parental influence gets weaker and weaker. Most of what you discipline with is authority. Don't lose the moral authority by your own bad behavior and immaturity. The kids won't respect you and won't listen to what you say. At all times you are building the right to tell them what to do.
- **Investment Allows Correction** - When you've met your child's emotional needs and given them what they need, you feel confident to implement authority and enact discipline. If they are needy and you haven't done a great job investing in them, it weakens your

perspective and authority even in your own mind. Discipline the behavior; Nurture the heart.

- **It's not about Perfect, but Healthy** - the goal in parenting isn't to be a perfect parent, there isn't such a thing. The goal isn't to make your kids think you are a superhero, you aren't. The goal isn't to wow your neighbors and keep up a show. The point is to be a healthy person who really loves their kids and is doing their best.

### **Conclusion**

- **All of our Kids are Unique** - the goal is to find the processes, love languages, disciplines and equipping that works the best for each one.
- **Let's pray for our kids right now.**