

## INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles, please, to Psalm 78. I'm bringing the third of four messages in this series entitled, "Blueprints for Beautiful Homes." The last couple of weeks we have been talking about marriage. Today we're going to talk about building beautiful children and families, as we talk about how to be good, effective parents.

I recently read a bumper sticker that said, "Insanity is hereditary; you get it from your kids." It is tough to be a parent, and sometimes while we are trying to teach our kids, our kids are teaching us something.

I got something funny off the Internet not too long ago. It is from a mother, and apparently she has quite a son. She said, "These are some of the things my son has taught me recently:

- You should not throw baseballs up when a ceiling fan is turned on.
- The glass in a double-paned window will not stop a baseball that has been hit by a ceiling fan.
- I've discovered that the ceiling fan motor is not strong enough to rotate a 42-pound boy wearing a Superman cape, hanging by a dog leash.
- I've learned that when you hear the toilet flush, followed by the words, 'uh-oh,' it's already too late.
- I also learned from my son that no matter how much Jell-O you dump into a swimming pool, you still can't walk on water.
- My son has taught me that VCRs will not eject a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
- My son has also taught me that the spin cycle on a washing machine can make a cat very dizzy.
- I also learned that a dizzy cat can throw up two times its own body weight.
- Most importantly, I've learned that only with a sense of humor can you survive parenthood.

Let's look at Psalms 78, and I want us to begin in verse 4 and discover the goal of every parent and grandparent. "We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, [and here's the continuing goal of parenthood] so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. [Here's the goal] Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds, but would keep his commands." Every mom and dad and every grandparent wants verse 7 to be true of their children and grandchildren, "that they would put their trust in God." Here is the warning in verse 8, "That they would not be like their forefathers (here's the bad example) a stubborn and rebellious generation whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him."

**B**ASIC  
**I**NSTRUCTIONS  
**B**EFORE  
**L**EAVING  
**E**ARTH

I wanted to give you what I'm calling B.I.B.L.E. truth for parents. I want us to take the word Bible and let it be an acrostic that teaches us something. B.I.B.L.E. stands for this: Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. That's what the Bible is. This book contains the basic instructions before leaving earth. This book contains the basic instructions if you want to know how to be a parent, how to be a friend, how to be a husband and wife, how to succeed in life.

I want to talk about four stages of parenting, depending upon the age of your child. If you are a parent or a grandparent, listen, because in each stage I have something to say to parents. But kids and teenagers listen, because in each stage, there is something I want to say to you.

## **I. AGE 0-5: CORRECTING STAGE**

First of all, let's talk about birth through age 5. This is what I call the correcting stage because the main attitude of parents during this stage of the life of their child ought to be, "My child has a problem, and my goal is to correct that problem."

### **1. Parent's Goal: Correct a child's selfish nature**

What is the parent's goal? The parents' goal is to correct a child's selfish nature. Proverbs 22:15 is our verse for this phase of parenting, "Folly [the King James Version says foolishness] is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him."

In other words, moms and dads, while you are childproofing your house for those little ones, make sure you house-proof your child. We must look at our child as a person who has a selfish, yes, sinful nature that has to be addressed when they are very, very young.

I told you before, you don't have to teach a little child to steal; you don't have to teach a little child to lie; you don't have to teach them to be selfish. They are just born that way. You go up to any three or four year old who is playing with their toys and if you try to take those toys away, that little child is going to yell, "Mine." He's going to try to get all he can for himself. That is our sinful nature.

What I'm sharing with you this morning, you don't hear many places, because I'm talking about what the Bible teaches about the heart, not what secular humanism teaches about the human heart. Secular humanism is saying people are basically good at heart, and if you give them the right kind of environment and the right kind of education, they will blossom into their goodness. The Bible teaches we are rotten to our core. We are born sinners and unless something happens, a change of heart, (we call that a conversion to Christ) we are all rotten sinners, we are all selfish. When I was a child I had not committed a lot of sins, but I was a self-centered person. Everything revolved around me and what I felt and what I thought. When we become Christians, we

remove ourselves from being the center of the universe and we put Jesus Christ at the center of our universe.

Not only does the Bible say that but also a few years ago the state of Minnesota conducted research into juvenile delinquency. Listen to the summary of the Minnesota Crime Commission. "Every baby starts life as a potential criminal. He is completely self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it, his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys or maybe his uncle's watch. If you deny him these things, he seethes with rage and aggressiveness, which would be murderous were he not so little and helpless. (This means that children are born potential delinquents.) If permitted to continue in their self-centered world, given free rein to satisfy their every want, every child would grow up to be a criminal, a thief, a killer.

Isn't that strange, hearing from the Minnesota Crime Commission the same thing the Bible says? It is because these people, who have to deal with criminals all the time, recognize the source of the problem.

I'll give you this other example. The Houston Police Department has issued for parents a list of four ways to make sure you ruin your child. They said if you want to ruin your child, do these four things: (1) Give your child everything he or she wants. (2) When your child picks up bad habits, laugh at them. When they stomp their foot and say "no" to you, just laugh, "Isn't that cute?" (3) Never give them any spiritual training until they're 18, and then let them decide on their own. (4) Avoid using the word "wrong." It may produce guilt in them.

The Bible says in the heart of every child, even at a young age, they have a self-centered nature, a stubborn and rebellious nature. How do you deal with it? Look at Proverbs 22:15 again? "The rod of discipline will drive it far from him." I'm ready to get all the letters I usually get when I talk about this, but that is fine. I believe if America is going to survive, we must get back to the old-fashioned biblical principles of raising children. We have allowed too many liberal social scientists to tell us that we should never inflict any kind of pain on our children.

I think you should never use your hands, parents, to hurt your child. I think you should never use your hand to slap your child, to hit your child, to pinch your child, to thump your child, to grab your child, and God forbid, shaking your child. That's why the Bible in many places talks about a rod of discipline, which is a neutral object. You use your hands to embrace your child, to caress your child and to love your child. Your child should not fear you.

At our house, as our girls were growing up, we had this little, fat ruler we called the trouble stick. In fact, I wrote on it, "trouble stick." We kept it in a bottom drawer in our kitchen. When Jenni or Laura Grace did something where they demonstrated open rebellion, where they intentionally disobeyed or did something that was wrong, after we had warned them what the punishment would be, I would always say, "Go get the trouble stick." I tell you, sometimes it took them two or three hours to walk to the bottom drawer. They would pull it out and come dragging back to me with that trouble stick. The anticipation of punishment is part of the punishment.

I would apply the board of discipline to the seat of education. Then I would let them be alone for a few minutes. After a few minutes Cindy or I would go into her room, and we would sit down

and hug her and tell her we loved her and tell her why we did what we did. When I was growing up, my dad used to spank me sometimes, and he would always say to me, "Son, this hurts me more than it hurts you." I never believed him. I wanted to say, "Well, don't hurt yourself so bad next time, Daddy."

Parents, you know it does hurt you to discipline your child. It made me sick to my stomach. Sometimes that's why we may refrain from disciplining our children, because it is easier not to do it. One of the very worst things we can do for our children is to warn them not to do something and threaten punishment and then let them get away with it anyway. That is worse than never even warning them about it to start with. That is why the Bible says to use a neutral object to drive it (folly) far from him. That is the parent's goal during this stage to correct that selfish nature.

How early should we start disciplining our children? That's a good question. It varies. When we see that selfish, rebellious nature come forth, that is when we begin to correct it.

## **2. Child's Discovery: Obedience is good for me!**

Here's the child's discovery during this age. I know we don't have many five-years-olds or younger in this service, but maybe there are some older children who haven't discovered this yet. Maybe even some who are 17 or 18 haven't discovered it yet, but here it is. Obedience is good for me. Every child needs to take this attitude, "I'm going to do myself a favor, I'm going to obey my parents." The Bible says in Ephesians 6, "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the First Commandment with promise, 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long on the earth.'"

What is God saying to children? He is saying, "Do yourself a favor. It is going to work out so much better for you all of your life if you obey your parents."

## **II. AGE 6-12: TRAINING STAGE**

I call this the training stage. Notice the difference between stage 1 and 2. By the way, kids and parents, in that first stage when you tell your child to do something and they say, "why?" it is okay to say, "Because I say so, that's why." That is basically what you are trying to do; you are trying to teach them that obedience is good. On the other hand, when they get a little bit older and you tell them to do something and they say "Why?" stage two is not the stage where you say, "Because I say so, that's why." You need to give them a little bit more information, because this is when you are trying to train them.

What is it you are trying to build into them? Values. Look at Proverbs 22:6, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Now, that doesn't mean if you drag your kid to Sunday School or make him go to youth camp that one day when he turns 65, he is going to be loving the Lord. That is not what it means. It basically means that if you create in your child a desire to love God, that desire will always be there.

Look at that word "train" in verse 6. It was a word that was used of Hebrew midwives when they would deliver a newborn infant. The Hebrew midwife would often take her forefinger, roll it in sweet water and touch the baby's mouth and stimulate the sucking action of that little baby. They thought they were causing it to feed, to nurse. But we know today that is probably a very instinctive nature that they didn't have to stimulate. That is the word that is used here. Parents, that means your goal is to stimulate in your children a desire for the right things.

## **1. Parent's Goal: Teach why obedience is good**

The parents' goal is to teach why obedience is good. Luke 2:52 says, "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Those are the four areas of values that we need to instill in training our children.

Number one is educational, intellectual or academic values. "Jesus increased in wisdom." We need to teach our children that education is good for them and they need to study. We need to read to our children, stimulate them educationally.

Number two, "he grew in stature." We need to teach them the value of physical fitness, physical values. Take care of our bodies; don't overeat; exercise. This is the only body we have; we need to take care of it.

Number three, we teach them spiritual values. "Jesus increased in favor with God." We stimulate in them a desire to love God. We do not just lecture them; we show them. Moms and dads don't expect your kids to grow up praying and reading the Bible unless they see you praying and reading the Bible in your home. Don't expect your kids to grow up talking about Jesus and having a good relationship with Jesus, if they don't see in you a good relationship with Jesus. Parents, have you discovered that what you do can totally cancel out what you say to your kids? If you dads have one of those radar detectors, a fuzz buster on your dashboard, don't bother to talk to your kids about honesty and obeying the law. (It got quiet in here all of a sudden.) They are watching you more than they are listening to what you are saying. Kids can spot a hypocrite light years away.

The fourth value according to Jesus is social values. "He increased in favor with man." In other words, we teach our kids how to be friends with one another, the importance of good social help and self-image. During this time, we are trying to teach our children some important principles. I have had schoolteachers say to me, "Pastor, you would not believe some of the children who come into kindergarten and the first grade. It is so obvious that the parents have been there and taught them the values about respect for authority and obedience. Yet we get some other children, and it is obvious they have never been taught anything about respect for authority."

## **2. Child's Discovery: I obey because I respect!**

The child says this or should discover, "I obey because I respect. I obey because I respect my parents." Kids, let me give you a word. Look at number one and number two, the correcting stage and the training stage. It is one thing for you to obey your parents because you are afraid you will be punished if you don't, but that is not the best motive. The best motive for you to obey

your parents is because you reach a time in your life where you love them and you respect them and you want to do what they want you to do out of respect, not out of fear of punishment. Now, I don't claim to be a great father. I really don't. I have a 21-year-old daughter and a 17-year-old daughter. If you want to find out what kind of father I am, check with me in about ten years. But I do believe I am married to one of the world's greatest mothers. My wife is a great mother. When our girls first started going to school, my wife did three things: (1) She gave them their own alarm clock. (2) She said, "I'm not going to wake you up. You're going to get up on your own for school." (3) She said, "Before you come down to breakfast, you're going to make your bed and clean your room." It was not optional; no argument about it. It was just something that was going to be. When they came down, we would sit around the breakfast table and have a family devotional. I'm not going to stand up here and tell you that every single morning they did that, but it was expected of them every single morning. There weren't many times that didn't happen.

Parents who want to instill spiritual values in their children need to have family devotions when their children are young, even though it is hard for children 2 and 3 years old to enter into family devotions, but this is the age when they need family devotions. When they become teenagers, their schedules are such that it might not always be possible, but this is the age it needs to be focused in on. This is when we need to train them.

Parents, there is nothing in your life more important than raising your children when they're this age. No job, no church work, no hobby is more important than raising your children at this age. I heard about a farmer in Iowa years ago who had four sons. He grew corn, and every year he would send his four boys out in the field to harvest the corn by hand. His neighbor farmer said to him, "We've got one of these gasoline-powered harvesters. You could harvest ten times as much corn if you used this instead of sending your boys out there to harvest corn." The farmer looked at his neighbor and said, "Friend, I'm not raising corn, I'm raising boys."

What we instill into our children, they are going to carry with them all their lives. Children are like wet cement, and the values and the character that we inscribe upon their hearts at this age they're going to carry with them all their life.

I know it is hard for some of you to believe that those precious grandchildren of yours are selfish and sinners. Darryle Dunks, our Minister of Forerunners, said he was sitting outside a McDonald's not too long ago. He said that he saw this mother bringing a little girl out of McDonald's, and apparently she had done something wrong, because this mother was pulling her out of there, spanking her as she went. They got into the car next to Darryle. He said he felt such sympathy for that little girl. He said he smiled at her, a smile that was full of love and I'm-sorry-and-God-bless-you and all of that. He said when that little girl looked through the window and saw him doing that, she stuck her tongue out. Darryle said he wanted to get out and whip her, too.

That self-centered, sinful nature has got to be dealt with, and only Jesus Christ can change it. That is why most kids need to be saved before age 12, they need to realize, "I am a sinner, I am a self-centered person, and something's got to happen in me."

### **III. AGE 13-19: COACHING STAGE**

This age is what I call the coaching stage. Now, you see, there's a different strategy that you apply to each age. And listen, moms and dads, when they become teenagers, about all you need to do and all you should do is coach them. Some of the greatest frustrations in life occur when parents try to teach preschoolers like teenagers, "I'm going to advise you on the thing you ought to do here, darling." And then they try to treat teenagers like preschoolers. You can't parent the same for different ages.

Here's the verse for raising teenagers. Proverbs 29:15, "The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother." Look at that verse again. Earlier we said the rod of correction drives out folly. That is sort of a negative ramification. But there is a positive ramification and a positive loving discipline that imparts wisdom. When your kid becomes a teenager, you pray to God they have learned something from your discipline. Here is the thing you hope they have learned. When they do wrong, there is punishment that follows. But when they do right, there is reward that follows. If they haven't learned that when they become teenagers, we are all in for a heap of trouble.

Do you know what Mark Twain said about raising teenagers? He said humorously, "When your son turns 13, put him in a wooden barrel, nail the lid down and feed him through the knothole. And then when he turns 16, plug up the knothole."

#### **1. Parent's Goal: Make the right choices**

Parents of teenagers, it is tough. It is not easy. And really, you can't do a lot of disciplining, and a lot of times, punishing doesn't work really well. That is why you better do it early. What you can do when they are teenagers is coach them, advise them and steer them in the right direction. You say to them, "Make the right choices."

Do you know what a coach does? A coach stands on the sidelines and calls the plays, but he doesn't execute the plays. He says, "This is the play I think you ought to run." Sometimes they run it to perfection, sometimes they fumble the ball, but he coaches and he doesn't quit coaching. Sometimes parents need to call time-out, huddle up, talk about things, call some plays, but we can't get on that field and run those plays with those teenagers. Every teenager ought to discover that his or her choices have consequences.

#### **2. Teenager's Discovery: All my choices have consequences!**

Teenagers, do you remember when you were in science class and you learned that one of Newton's laws of physics was, "For every action, there is an opposite and equal reaction." You can bank on that. You can also bank on a moral law in the word of God that says in Galatians 6:9, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a person sows or plants, they're going to reap."

Remember teenagers when you were little and life was easy? Your mom and dad laid out your clothes for you to wear and they fixed the food for you to eat. When you went somewhere, you

hopped in the car and they drove you. Times are different now. Life is full of your own choices. But, for every choice you make, there are consequences. For the good choices, there are good consequences. For the bad choices, there are bad consequences. The sooner you learn that, the smarter and more mature you are going to be.

I cannot think of one good consequence that is going to come from choosing to drink and drive. I cannot think of one good consequence that is going to come from choosing to do drugs. The only thing that is going to come from that is addiction and suffering and an appetite that won't be satisfied. Teenagers, if you choose to cheat in school, I can't think of one good thing that is going to come out of that, because you are going to end up cheating for the rest of your life, and you're going to get in trouble for it one day. If you choose to have premarital sex, I can't think of one good consequence that comes out of it, but I can think of a lot of bad ones.

Kids, if you choose the right things, life can be great. If you choose to honor your parents, to obey them even when you're a teenager, some good things are going to happen. If you choose to study and be diligent and honest in school, great consequences are going to come from that. If you choose to love God and follow Him, great consequences are going to come from that. Teenagers, I want you to know that for every choice you make, there are consequences. Know it. Then it's up to you to make the choices.

Several years ago, researchers at Harvard University conducted a study of some young adults who seemingly had survived teenage years without any rebellion, without any major problems, and now they seemed to be healthy and successful in life. When they examined thousands of these young adults, there were four factors that were consistent in all of their lives. Harvard University said:

- (1) There was firm discipline from a full-time father.
- (2) There was the supervision and companionship of a mother during the day.
- (3) There was open affection of the parents for each other and for their children, and
- (4) there were lots of times spent in family activities.

Those were the four factors that rose to the top. Those are things that make families healthy and strong.

You know, parents, I suppose the worst message you could ever get is that your kid has done something atrocious. I clipped this article and a lot of others about what happened in Columbine High School in Colorado. The title of this article is, "The Town Questions how the Parents Missed the Signals of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold." The article asks, "Did the parents turn a blind eye to the warning signs their sons were deeply troubled?" Friends say what is extraordinary about the two families is how ordinary they seemed to be. They were quiet families who celebrated Easter with their neighbors, mowed their lawns, and sat on bleachers on long summer nights watching Little League. I doubt they did anything wrong in the lives of their sons when they were teenagers, but as we can all do, we can look back into those earlier stages and say, "What could we have done when they were younger to have changed some of the outcome?" Someone has said that the best place for punishment in America is in the playpen, not in the state pen. When we get these children early enough and teach them about the rebellious nature that is

in all of us, and that it can be forgiven and changed by Jesus Christ, the outcome is always a lot better.

Moms and dads don't feel guilty. Don't feel like you failed. Don't look back and say, "I wish I had known this 10 or 15 or 20 years ago." You still have the chance from where you are now to be the kind of parent God wants you to be or be the kind of grandparent God wants you to be. I will say this as I finish, when it comes to caring for children and young people, the way we often spell love is, T-H-I-N-G-S. But the way they spell love is T-I-M-E, spending time with them. I heard about a little boy who asked his dad when his dad came home from work one day, "Daddy, how much money do you make every hour at work?" The dad said, "Don't bother me now." In a few minutes, the daddy started wondering if it is something for school. He didn't want his son to flunk out, so he went into his room and said, "Son, I don't get paid by the hour, but I figure I make \$30 an hour based on a 40-hour work week, but I always make more than that." He went back and started reading the newspaper. In a few minutes, the daddy heard a piggy bank rattling in the boy's bedroom. In a few moments, the nine-year-old son walked in and said, "Daddy, here's \$15. Can I buy half an hour of your time? Just for you to be with me?" You see, time is the most valuable thing you can give to your children.

#### **IV. AGE 20+: FRIENDSHIP STAGE**

I'm not going to say much about stage 5, because next week's sermon will focus on family relationships when your kids are 20 and older. That is the friendship stage.

##### **1. Parent's Goal: Launch them into life**

The best thing the parents can do during this time is to launch them into life. Here is a great verse to claim if you are a parent in this group. 3 John 4 say, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." Isn't that a great verse to claim, to know that my children are walking in the truth of the word of God? That gives me great joy. Launch them out into life. I will say this to parents of teenagers, the more tightly you hold on to your teenagers, the more they are going to struggle to get out of your grip. The more you hang on, the more they will struggle. As you learn to loosen your grip a little bit and give them a little freedom, the more freedom they feel to come back closer to you. The nicest thing that a mother bird can do is to kick those baby birds out and say, "Fly for yourself." The most tragic thing a mama bird can do is say, "Stay here in this nest because I like you, and you give me identity." We talk about the empty nest. It is not bad. It is a reward of God. It is a blessing. If you don't believe it, just try what we call the "re-feathered nest." Your job is to launch them out into life.

##### **2. Young Adult's Discovery: I can honor my parents!**

Then finally, here's the focus of children who are 20 or older, you need to discover that you can say, "I can honor my parents." You may not obey them, but you honor them for all of your life. This is what I'm asking you to do this morning. Whether you are a child, teenager, a parent, a grandparent, I'm just asking to you say, "God, I've made mistakes, I've failed. I haven't been perfect, but having been exposed to the truth of your word, from this day forward, I commit myself to be the kind of child or teenager, parent or grandparent, that you want me to be." And

the good news is, one day we will stand before God, and He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Let's pray together. Father, I pray your Holy Spirit would permeate this place, and people would learn from the principles of your word about how you direct us to raise children. Then Lord, where there needs to be a change of attitudes, a change of behavior, I pray you would bring it about. I pray they won't hear this and forget it, but that they will begin to apply it to their lives, because when we do things your way, that's the way we're going to be happy. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## OUTLINE

### I. AGES 0-5: CORRECTING STAGE

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him. *Proverbs 22:15*

1. Parent's Goal: Correct a child's selfish nature
2. Child's Discovery: Obedience is good for me!

### II. AGES 6-12: TRAINING STAGE

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. *Proverbs 22:6*

1. Parent's Goal: Teach why obedience is good
2. Child's Discovery: I obey because I respect!

### III. AGES 13-19: COACHING STAGE

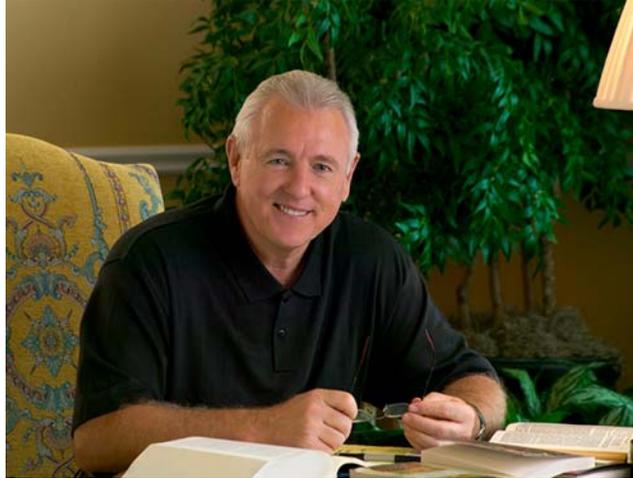
The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. *Proverbs 29:15*

1. Parent's Goal: Make the right choices
2. Teenager's Discovery: All my choices have consequences!

### IV. AGES 20+: FRIENDSHIP STAGE

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. *III John 4*

1. Parent's Goal: Launch them into life
2. Young Adult's Discovery: I can honor my parents!



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes