

Parenting is More than a Formula: Part 2

I. The biggest problem with many parenting formulas is that they can become pharisaical.

- A. Those advocating certain formulas are often assuming (explicitly or implicitly) a form of “parental determinism” – the (unbiblical) belief that how well you follow their formula determines how your kids turn out.
 - 1. Examples of parental determinism.
 - 2. Failure is blamed on failure to follow the formula (keep the law).
 - 3. They make strong hurtful statements, which cannot be substantiated from Scripture, about parents who ‘fail’.
 - 4. If outcomes are determined by being under the correct outward influences, then does God pass our parenting test? Ex. 4:22 Isa. 1:2 Gen. 4:6ff
 - a. Why did Cain rebel after God Himself admonished him?
 - b. Israel turns from Him.
 - c. Why did Judas betray Jesus after hearing His teaching and seeing His perfect life for three years?
- B. Parents who depend upon formulas can tend toward pharisaical pride, as if we can save our kids by our good works and faithfulness.
 - 1. Parents are divided into successful winners and unsuccessful losers.
 - 2. Those who seem to be succeeding (winners) will be tempted to pharisaical pride.
 - 3. Those who are having problems with their kids (losers) will be tempted to anger or despair.
 - 4. When people have trouble with their kids, they are told it was because they didn’t follow the system carefully enough.
 - 5. We all are incapable of perfectly keeping the law. Even if there was a “formula”, we couldn’t follow it perfectly because we are all still struggling with our own sin
 - 6. Parents afflicted with phariseeism go from one system (or guru) to another looking for the approach which will work. Ecc. 12:12
- C. Moralistic formulas can also create kids who are Pharisees, with the outside of the cup looking clean, while the inside of the cup remains filthy. Mark 7:6,18-23
 - 1. Children, like adults, are prone to self-righteousness, wanting to feel good about themselves by following an attainable man-made moral standard.
 - 2. There are many outwardly obedient, well-mannered, good-looking children who are still lost and may rebel once they become young adults.
 - 3. *Obedience which isn’t motivated by love for God and His grace is dangerous* (Fitzpatrick).
- D. Pharisaical parenting methodologies will sooner or later lead to a train wreck.

II. Parenting is not about following an extra-biblical man-made formula; it is about the gospel.

- A. Many parents are bearing an incredible burden of (false) guilt.
 - 1. Fathers don’t measure up to what the books say about the perfect dad.
 - 2. Mothers are very susceptible to peer pressure and perfectionism.
 - 3. Many are in danger of giving up.

- B. The law alone will not lead to parenting success.
 1. Man-made rules may have the appearance of wisdom, but they will not produce holiness. Col. 2:23
 2. We cannot be saved or sanctified merely by the law.
 3. Nor can our kids be saved or sanctified merely through the law.

- C. Parents desperately need the gospel.
 1. Confess we can't do it.
 2. Repent of phariseeism.
 3. Seek grace for ourselves.
 4. Plead for your kids' souls.

- D. Our kids can only be saved by the work of God.
 1. They cannot be saved by our works or theirs.
 2. They need to understand that they are not good, which is why they need a Savior. II Co. 5:21,17 I Pe. 3:18 Phil. 3:9 John 15:5 Rom. 6:1ff
 3. While it is our duty to seek to be Christlike in our families, it is more important to confess that we fall very short of being Christlike so that we can point ourselves and our kids to our need for Christ.
 4. We need to teach our children the Bible in a way that goes beyond moralistic stories which focus on what we should be doing and instead focuses upon what God has done for us in redemption.
 5. God often saves and uses people from the most (humanly) unlikely backgrounds. Ezek. 18 II Tim. 1:5 Heb. 11:23-25
 6. God sometimes works through those who don't follow our formulas.

- E. God is at work in our lives through our parenting. II Co. 12:9-10 (**From Dave Harvey audio**)
 1. We often want to look upon parenting as a means to display our strength.
 2. God uses our parenting to display our weakness so that we might utterly depend upon His strength. *When I am weak, then I am strong.*
 3. Stop trying to manage others' perception of you and your kids. Instead be honest about your weaknesses.
 4. Parenting in weakness is used by God to drive us to seek healing and strength in Christ whose grace alone is sufficient. II Co. 12:9

- F. Parenting is about God more than you or your kids. (From *Parenting is your highest calling and eight other myths that trap us in worry and guilt*, by Leslie Leyland Fields).
 1. Parenting is about fulfilling God's purposes, not our agenda. Mt. 22:37f 10:37-39
 2. Putting God first frees us to better love our children.
 3. God parents (us) for holiness, not happiness. Lev. 19:2 Heb. 12:14
 4. Parenting is more about people than a process.
 5. God calls us to be faithful, not "successful". Ezek. 2:3-4 3:7 Isa. 6:8ff
 6. We must rely upon God rather than formulas.
 7. Our ultimate hope must be in God, not our kids. Jer. 17:5-8

III. Conclusion

- A. Gospel parenting isn't just another formula.
- B. God is teaching us to graciously love our sinful children just as He loves us. **Ro. 5:8**