

The Church On Purpose 4

My Family On Purpose: Winning My Children for the Lord

Deut. 4:9; 6:1-10; 2 Tim. 1:5; Eph. 6:4

Introduction:

1. Our most important responsibility as parents and grandparents is to communicate the faith to our children and our grandchildren. How will we make disciples of the nations if we are ineffective in making disciples of our own children?
2. The passages we have just read make it clear that this is what God is expecting us to do.
3. Ken Ham and Britt Beemer published a book entitled ALREADY GONE, Why your kids will quit church and what you can do to stop it.” From their study they concluded that “conservative churches” are not being effective in winning young people to the faith.
4. When I look out over most congregations among us I see the same evidence. Where are our children? When I look out over the congregation at Fort Logan I see many parents whose children are not faithful to the Lord.
 - a. What is the effect of one untaught generation? To win the next generation we must make some kind of “cold” contact.
 - b. Before they were in our home where we had more time together, more opportunity, and more sensitive hearts.
 - c. Now winning them for the Lord is more difficult, even unlikely.
 - d. And so we see congregations aging and dying.
5. How do we turn this around? Where do we begin?

Discussion:

- I. It is our personal responsibility—parents and grandparents.
 - A. We can blame the world. Cf. Lot “oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men” (2 Pet. 2:7).
 1. We can blame the education system.
 - a. “It promotes the general theory of evolution and undermines the existence of God and the credibility of the Bible as His word.”
 - b. “It promotes humanistic philosophy.”
 2. We can blame media.
 - a. Television.
 - b. Reading materials.
 - c. The internet.
 3. To be sure, the world exercises a powerful influence. We are in a war for souls and we underestimate the power of the spiritual forces of this darkness (Eph. 6:10ff).
 - B. We can blame the church.
 1. “They are not producing good programs for the children.”
 2. Ken Ham and Britt Beemer indicate that the so-called “Sunday school” programs in “conservative” churches are not being effective.
 3. I do not know of research exclusive to churches of Christ, but I would say we are

little different than conservative denominations.

4. We are trying and we are concerned. But we cannot depend on the church to do our job. Bringing our children to worship assemblies is good, but not good enough. "Subcontracting child-rearing can lead to shoddy results."
- C. It is our responsibility as parents and grandparents.
 1. Blaming someone else does not change the results.
 2. We certainly need to grieve over our circumstances of generations lost, but we can NOT throw up our arms in despair. We need to accept responsibility to do differently.

II. Where should we start? "Unless the Lord builds the house . . ." (Psa. 127:1) - How does He build His house? He models and instructs us.

- A. He makes an unconditional covenant commitment to us. He treats us with grace. He uses His power to empower us and so creates a relationship of closeness. In this way He communicates who He is through His actions.
- B. He communicates to us through His word. In other words, He instructs us.
 1. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).
 2. We learn to place our trust in God by learning what He has done for us through Christ. We learn that He is not an ogre, but a Father who loves us and is willing to do whatever He can do for our benefit. We learn He is worthy of our trust and that He is on our side, no matter what.
- C. We can follow His model.
 1. Is this not what Deut. 6 is calling on us to do?
 2. It is really about communicating who we are to our children.
 3. If our job, our "things" (the car we drive, our property, our business, our house, etc.), our money, our entertainment, are our top priorities this becomes our message to our children.
 4. If the Lord and His kingdom are our top priorities how can we do anything but communicate this to our children? (Matt. 6:19-24).
- D. Paul C. Vitz wrote a book entitled FAITH OF THE FATHERLESS, in which he evaluated the fathers of noted atheists, including such individuals as Madeline Murray O'Hare, Thomas Huxley, and others. He observed that these people had problems with their fathers. Fathers who do not create a positive relationship with their children cripple their children's perceptions of God as a Father.
 1. I remember praying with my son Daniel when he was very little. As he prayed I realized he had gotten me confused with God. What a humbling experience!!!
 2. Fathers, and mothers, have an awesome impact on their children. And fathers in particular. "But my husband is not a Christian." Yes, your circumstance is challenging, but your goals for these children are the same. You will have to step up to the plate to both train your children and influence your husband for the Lord (1 Pet. 3:1ff).

III. Our objective as parents must be to create a trust relationship like the one that our heavenly Father has with us.

- A. We must be unconditionally committed to the well-being of this child.
 1. It is a covenant (Deut. 4:23).
 2. God is committed to us in this way (Deut. 4:40). He is acting for our good always.
 3. He loves us (Deut. 4:37). Cf. Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:7ff, esp. 19.
 4. He chose us (Deut. 4:37). Cf. Eph. 1:4
 5. He brought us out of Egypt (Deut. 4:37). Cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-6.

- B. We must be gracious with our children. Stern, stiff, demanding, angry, not so effective—macho worldly perspective. Compassion, kindness, love is effective.

1. They are going to sin, make mistakes, and use poor judgment.
2. We must be flexible with them.
3. “But when they do it is going to cost me!” That’s right. Just like our sin cost our Father the precious blood of His son, but such is the nature of unconditional commitment and grace.
4. It is not without rules and expectations and appropriate responses. Faith is the appropriate response to God and faith is the appropriate response from our

children.

We do not respond to Him appropriately all the time even though He is the perfect Father. How can I expect my children to respond to me appropriately all the time given my imperfection? But we can help them to see that we are on their side.

- C. We can empower our children.

1. From our position of authority we can use our power to help them thrive. Example of educating them.
2. We use our money, our time and our energy to help them be all they can be.
3. We can lift them up when they fall. We can forgive them when they sin. We can discipline them to be all they can be (Heb. 12:4-13).
4. We cannot abandon them. We cannot turn our heart away from them.

- D. It is out of this kind of trust relationship that intimacy (closeness, rather than distance) occurs (Cf. Titus 1:6: “children who believe (are faithful)—some interpret this to be faithful to their father as evidenced by their not being accused of dissipation or rebellion. My point would be that fathers must create the environment for such trust to develop.)

- E. Act deliberately.

1. Fathers, exercise your spiritual leadership here. Mothers are critical, but father’s especially so.
2. Spend time. Eat together. Other responsibilities interfere—work. But why are you working? Is it not for your family? Or is it for your good feeling about yourself and your accomplishments? Turn your heart toward your children, not toward yourself, building a business, etc.
3. Look for things you can do!

IV. Not only does God give us His example to follow; He instructs us. We must communicate our faith through instruction!

- A. “You shall teach them diligently” (Deut. 6:7).

- B. I highly recommend doing some kind of daily devotional study with your children.

1. The problem some have with this is they make it a difficult task.

2. Make it simple. Short. Relevant.
3. Don't condemn yourself for missing a night, or a week, come back to it and keep going. Don't quit!

C. "I don't know how."

D. Some suggestions.

1. Time at night to read, to talk, to pray as part of bedtime routine.
2. Books like the Arch Book Series, Bible "Story" Books, Mrs. Lee's Books, Etc. Video materials. Internet materials.
3. Daily Family Bible Reader, Don Bassett.
4. "Our Spiritual Heritage" Curriculum. A family based curriculum designed to focus on the family responsibility used in the Bible classroom as follow up to what parents have done throughout the week. It has daily activities done at home.
5. Integrate singing, prayer.
6. Be flexible. Change as children get older.
7. Last year at Thanksgiving we meet with your children and grandchildren at the

Lake.

Rented house. Did Bible studies about the responsibilities we have as parents and grandparents to train our children and grandchildren. Did three studies in 2-3 days. What they enjoyed most about it? "The Bible studies."

8. Motorcycle trips with studies about spiritual things. Those trips were kind of memorials in their transition to manhood.

Conclusion:

1. I have made a lot of mistakes as a parent.
2. I hope that my children will forgive me.
3. But we cannot allow our guilt and grief over our failures to hamper us from doing what needs to be done now.
4. "But my grown children are unfaithful." Recommend Rob Rienow's book WHEN THEY TURN AWAY, Drawing Your Adult Child Back to Christ.