



4.3 We are preparing our children, teaching them God's ways.

CHILDREN ARE A GIFT

As discussed in KMI 4.2, God brought marriage into being Himself, to be between one man and one woman. Out of this union, God wanted Godly offspring, children that are a heritage and reward from God ([Malachi 2:15](#), [Psalm 127:3](#)). This includes naturally born children as well as adopted children, as adoption is also a family model from Him. ([Romans 8:15](#))

PARENT, WHERE IS YOUR HEART FOCUSED?

How important is the parent-child relationship to God? Let's start off by looking at a very interesting piece of scripture found in Luke 1.

Malachi 4:5-6 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (6) And he will turn the **hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers**, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

Luke 1:17 “and he [John the Baptist] will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to ***turn the hearts of the fathers to the children**, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

***Turn the hearts of the fathers.** *These are the last words of the Old Testament, there uttered by a prophet, here expounded by an angel; there concluding the law, and here beginning the gospel* (Malachi 4:6). – [Commentary](#)

“To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children” is a very interesting phrase. It actually is talking about two different things at the same time. Turning the hearts of the fathers toward the children is definitely a call for care within a family for our kids. It's important to God that we take care of our children properly.

It is also a reminder to Israel that their hearts needed to be turned toward the same things that their fathers' (or in this instance their ancestors) hearts were. In other words, just as your forefathers did, look at your relationship with God as the most important relationship you have, and live your life that way. In both cases God is calling His people to pay attention to the relationships He created for us in the first place. As parents, our relationship with our children matters.

Q. If God was talking directly to you, what would turning your heart toward your children look like?

JESUS WANTS CHILDREN TO COME TO HIM

Mark 9:36-37 And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, (37) “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

Mark 10:13-16 And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. (14) But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. (15) Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” (16) And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands

There are two things to note from these particular pieces of scripture. First, is that Jesus was receiving children intentionally. People were bringing their children to Jesus to have them blessed and He was doing so. Do we bring our children to Jesus?

Secondly, He used this situation to teach. In Mark 9 we see Jesus teaching us that the lowliest people in our communities are important to Him; He cares for the smallest, least influential among us. For those of us who would represent Him, we need to reflect that kind of care as well. This is not the only time Jesus uses “the least of these” as an example of how He wants us to treat others. It is important to Him, and He wants it to be important to us.

The disciples on the other hand had a very different view of what was going on. They decided that children should not come to Jesus. There were better ways, in their mind, for Jesus to spend His time.

But notice how Jesus responds to them. Once again, the Great Teacher used this very normal situation, children coming to Him, to teach the people, and particularly the disciples, something they were not noticing. He wanted them to see that the simple and pure faith these children had in Him was the kind of faith all of us need to have. He wanted us to learn from them. Children trusted Jesus and they wanted to be with Him. Do we?

READ LUKE 18:15-17.

Q. How could you “up your game” in bringing your children to Jesus?

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (5) You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (7) 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.

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

Parents have an amazing opportunity to affect the next generation. Kids will look to us for what is real and what is important, and they are watching us all the time.

The question is, what are we showing them? What are we talking about with them while we are simply being a family at home? What are we talking to them about when we watch TV together or have a meal together or driving to school? What traits do we want our children to learn from us to be successful people in God’s Kingdom living here on earth?

The following excerpt from the Focus on the Family Ministry may give us some things to consider:

What are the 7 Traits of Effective Parenting?

The following are seven traits that are often present in the lives of parents who are raising kids who thrive in challenging situations. Parents may excel in some of these areas and fall short in others, but each trait can transform our Christian parenting, filling our children's hearts and minds with God's truth and bringing wisdom into our homes.

Love

John the apostle tells us that we learn love by looking at the love God has shown us. God's love came first and it is a truly sacrificial love. "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

Do you know what you love? Look at the people, activities and things you're attached to. Look at the sacrifices you make to see those people, do those activities or use those things. These are the areas of your life where you love. Children can see where your priorities are, where your love is directed.

God's love helps parents counteract our natural selfishness. His love reveals itself in His commitment to us and His sacrifice for us, long after our emotions have faded away. Children learn God's love through the sacrificial commitments we make to them and teach them to make.

Respect

The apostle Paul writes that we should think like Christ and treat others as more important than ourselves ([Philippians 2:3](#)). Respect recognizes the best in people. It is more than acknowledging a child's accomplishments. Children and teens are worthy of respect because God created them and loves them.

Respect teaches us not to treat others as unimportant. Nothing hurts a child more than being treated as if he is useless, and almost nothing encourages him more than being respected and valued.

One way to show respect to your family is to watch your language. Biblical parenting outlines specific principles involving use of language within a family. Refuse to use cruel language — whether directed toward family members in your home or outsiders. As Christian parents, our language habits really do influence our ability to model respect to our children.

Intentionality

Being intentional means talking about and living out our values and priorities before allowing other influences into our home. This trait nurtures a consistency in family life that reinforces the other traits. When parents are intentional, they grow in wisdom and are able to keep their focus on how they act as believing parents ([Colossians 1:10](#)).

It is easy to be passive and let media and other influences set our family's priorities, but it's more effective to pay careful attention to how we live our lives. This is intentionality: making decisions as parents about how we will own the spiritual atmosphere in our homes.

Boundaries and Limits

Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, authors of the "Boundaries" book series, write that the purpose of boundaries in biblical parenting to "let good things in and keep bad things out." [Hebrews 12:1](#) says that in order to run our race well, we need to shake off the things that keep us from reaching our goal. Ordering our home with healthy boundaries for kids and adults helps us do that.

Being deliberate about boundaries — for media, behavior, relationships, godly living and a vibrant faith — means we do not let culture determine what is healthy for our family. Proverbs tells us, "Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge" (14:7). If we don't set our own boundaries in our families, other influences — culture, extended family or trends — will set our children's moral boundaries, and we may become surprised and dismayed by what they have learned.

Gratitude

As Paul begins his letter to the Philippians, he tells them how thankful he is every time he thinks of them ([Philippians 1:3-4](#)). Gratitude is not just a polite reaction to something good. It is a cultivated habit and a vital part of healthy relationships.

When we practice gratitude in our families, it helps children and parents fight selfishness, which causes division among families and friends. When gratitude is expressed on a regular basis and in deliberate ways, it helps our children learn to see all the good God does in our lives. A natural outcome of this within biblical parenting is that we learn to naturally praise Him, regardless of how we feel in the moment.

Grace and Forgiveness

Grace and forgiveness shock us. God forgave us while we were still sinners. He shows grace to imperfect people and continues to involve them in His plan.

Christian parents need to be willing to model forgiveness and grace to their children, regardless of the personal cost. Human nature prevents us from easily giving grace and forgiveness, yet we learn from God's Word that we need to give both or we can't expect to be forgiven ([Matthew 6:14-15](#)).

Adaptability

While he was in prison, Paul said something amazing: "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content" (Philippians 4:11). Paul learned to find peace in Christ, despite his situation. His personal happiness was not attached to his position, how well he was doing or what he was doing.

Teaching adaptability helps our children find peace — a deep peace that is stronger than the stresses and trials of life. Peace counteracts the unproductive worry that causes us to lose our trust in God. This flexibility and resilience, grown in difficult circumstances, allows a family to face both hardships and joys together, as they grow deeper in their faith. ([Focus on the Family, A Biblical Basis for the 7 Traits of Effective Parenting](#))

Q. What can you do to effectively teach your children in the normal routines of your lives?

SUMMARY

As parents, our hearts need to be turned toward our children like God's heart is turned toward us. Jesus wants our children near Him and wants parents to bring them. In our children we see a sincere faith and an innocent trust for us to emulate. We see an opportunity to affect them for Christ and in doing so we have an opportunity to bless the world through the adults they become.

LEADERSHIP CONNECTION QUESTION

Q. As you think about parenting, how does the health of your marriage affect your children?

(Note: There are many of us that may have a blended, broken, or single-parent family we are attempting to lead. We want to acknowledge that this makes parenting particularly difficult. But it is not impossible. God's grace covers us, and we want you to be encouraged that Jesus loves you, loves your children, and wants all of you near Him. He is utterly capable of leading you and caring for them with you. Learn to lean on Him.)

RESOURCES FOR NEXT STEPS

- **Website**
Focus on the Family
www.focusonthefamily.com
- **RightNow Media@Work**
The Art of Parenting
<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/462812>