

Family Ministry – Understanding Who Your Children Are

Introduction – Itching to get to the practical? Sometimes, as parents, we simply want a hurry-up list of how to do it. But set the pragmatism aside for a moment. Your theology matters. You need to understand who your children are and how that affects your training and admonition in the Lord.

Children in the Image of God (Gen 1:26-28) – We are not bringing highly developed and evolved animals into the world. We are giving birth to image-bearers who were created to reflect the glory of God.

A Little Creator – As the context of Gen 1 would make clear, man is created to be like God, able to think, plan, and execute those plans with ethical values.

A Soul/Spirit Bearer (Gen 2:7, Eccl 12:7, 3:11) – We are personal, self-conscious, Godlike creatures with a sense of eternity from the beginning.

Dominion Takers (Gen 1:26-27) – These little ones have been brought forth to rule over the world as God's representatives. They are to do so according to knowledge, righteousness and holiness, twisted in the fall, but progressively restored in Christ (Eph 4:24, Col 3:10).

Implications – Children are to be trained and shepherded as God's image-bearers, with souls and spirits and consciences. They are not to be tamed like wild animals. Put another way, how we treat our children and how we treat our dogs should look very different.

Children as Innately Depraved (Eph 2:1-3, Rom 5:12) – There is no doubt about it. Babies are really cute (well, most of the time). But we must remember they are always born covenantally dead in Adam. They are by nature, children of wrath.

Adam, Our Covenant Head (Rom 5:12, 14) – In God's wisdom, we are well represented in Adam, who fell on behalf of us all.

There is Sin in There (Prov 22:15) – Everyone hearing this is a descendant of Adam. We do not sin and therefore become sinners. We are sinners and therefore we sin. When David confessed his sin, he confessed his inherited sinfulness as well (Psalm 51:5).

Totally Depraved Babies (Rom 8:7-8) – By nature, they are unable to respond to God and his Word in a sincere and wholehearted (or holy) way. The only ones who will come to the Lord are those whom the Lord will draw to Himself (John 6:44).

Implications – Childishness is due to a child's frame. Selfishness is due to his nature. You must distinguish between the two.

There is no such thing as a 'good child'. We are all born in sin and simply need law and the strength to break the law in order to prove whom we really are.

Therefore, there is no such thing as 'the terrible twos'. There is no such thing as 'rebellious teenage years'. There is only sin, manifested by sinners according to their station in life.

God blesses the faithful application of discipline by parents as a means to the child's salvation and sanctification (Prov 29:15).

Children of Believing Parents (Gen 17:7, Acts 2:29, 1 Cor 7:14) – God has promised to be our God and to be God to our children. We are not to view our children as the same as children of unbelievers with regard to God's promises and obligations.

Regenerate or Not? – Wise parents will not assume their children are automatically regenerate. Neither will they assume the opposite. God has not placed these children in believing homes willy-nilly. With confidence in the promises of God, we look for fruit, responsiveness to forgiveness offered in Christ, and as they grow, the profession of their mouth.

When Was the Sunrise? – These children are not in the same situation many of us were in. God has been especially kind to them. Therefore, we do not need to look for 'flashy testimonies' to prove their salvation. Gratefully notice the promised results of believing Christ as they grow.

Children in True Liberty and Blessedness (Psalm 1:1-2, 119:1-3, 44-45, Prov 3:13-18) – Your children must grow up understanding what true liberty really is – not freedom to sin, but freedom from sin.

They Are Not 'Missing Out' (Prov 20:17) – That sweet-looking sin really destroys; true liberty sees this.

Hedge of Thorns (Prov 15:19) – For your children this means that a foolish presumption leads to destruction. They must pursue holiness. For you it means that you must never leave your 'garden' untended, for weeds will grow. When you see thorns and snares in your children, do not first blame 'their friends'. You best look in the mirror.

Tireless Glory-Giving (Col 3:17) – Too many Christians think this parenting-stuff is second-rate ministry to the real work of the kingdom. They are short-sighted and plain wrong. This is the first and promised step of filling the earth with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. Each day, what you are doing is to be done 'unto the Lord'.