

The Fear of the Lord in Parenting (part 2)

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[0:00] Last week we talked about the fear of the Lord and parenting.! My intention was to go on and talk about work today.! But as I thought about it, I realized I really wanted to talk more practically about the topic of parenting and the fear of the Lord.

Last week in some ways was theoretical, it was theological. I hope in some ways it was practical, but today I really want to get down to brass tacks, so to speak.

Last week we talked about parenting needs to have an overarching theme. It needs to have a unifying theme. And we said that that theme should be the fear of the Lord.

It's interesting, at the end of Ecclesiastes, in that book, when everything is summed up, he says, so this is what is left.

What is the full end of man, being a man, living wisely? It's fear the Lord and keep His commands. That should be the theme of all of our lives.

[1:13] And so if it should be the theme of all of our lives, all of our life, it should be the theme of our parenting and what we are trying to put into our children's lives.

So the fear of the Lord, it should be the heart of parents. It should be in the heart of parents. And it should overflow into all of our parenting.

And then the fear of the Lord should be, above all else, what we are trying to impress upon our children. So let me repeat that, because that's sort of going to be the major outline of today, that the fear of the Lord should be at the heart of our parenting as parents.

And secondly, that it should be, above all else, what we are trying to impress upon our children. If they leave our home with only one thing, we want that one thing to be the fear of the Lord.

So that's what we want to talk about, those two things this morning. And so first, the fear of the Lord should be at the heart of our parenting. And I think what that means as parents, as moms and dads, is that our hearts need to be driven, to be motivated by the fear of the Lord.

[2:37] Our parenting should overflow from that spring that is in our hearts. And so what should motivate all of our parenting?

Well, it should be our great, holy, wise, loving, good God. Those four things that we talked about early on, that he is here, he is close, he is holy, he is good, he is faithful.

And so that sense of God's overflowing majesty, abundant grace, that feeling, that sense that God is good, God is big, God is holy, God is in control, God is here.

God is true. So really, it's a sense of just his multifaceted glory. That should be at the heart of our parenting.

So he's exalted, he's transcendent, but he's also close, he's just, but he's also gracious, he's loving and powerful.

[3:51] And parents, in our hearts, we need to have that sense, that intuition, so to speak.

That needs to be beating in our hearts as we parent and motivating all that we do. Now, last week, let me ask you this, and this is a sort of a review.

When that fear of the Lord, and really what I've just been describing is what the fear of the Lord is, when the fear of the Lord isn't in our hearts, what happens to our parenting?

What kind of parents do we turn out to be? What kind of parenting do we end up doing? We talked about this last week, so can I hear some answers or some thoughts?

Reactive parenting. And what I kind of meant by that is there's no overarching theme. It's sort of in the moment, spur of the moment parenting.

[4:52] We are always reacting. We don't have a positive direction. So it's the difference between a ship that knows where it wants to go and sort of a balloon that's just getting batted around and trying to make it maybe in some general direction, but always responding with no positive

momentum, impetus in a direction.

So reactive parenting. What else happens to our parenting? Feeling oriented. Yeah, feeling oriented. What do we mean by that?

Well, it would be hand in hand with the reactive, that you're, whether you're angry or you're sad, or you're parenting out of your emotions, and instead of controlling your emotions, you're responding to your child's emotion of the moment.

Right. Now, obviously, parenting is an emotional business. We're not talking about parenting as robots. But parenting where the number, the biggest thing that you're acting out of is your fear, your anger, your whatever you're feeling at that moment.

It's really to be unhinged in a lot of ways. And so, yeah, emotional parenting, so to speak. But obviously, godly parenting involves emotions.

[6:18] What else? What becomes the, Mark? Legalism. Legalism. Okay. What do you mean by that?

Just sort of? They just lay down the law. They don't care about their hearts. Okay. So you lay down the law. You're not addressing their hearts. Or maybe you're just interested in getting the behavior to look the right way.

Where you're not looking for the deeper motives of their heart, of faith and the fear of the Lord and love. Anything else?

I can think of one more thing that we kind of talked about. We start operating out of our idols. And this is, again, this is related to our reactive and emotional parenting.

We begin operating out of our idols. So do I love comfort? And if my kids are giving me comfort, that decides how I'm going to parent them. Or if they're not.

[7:21] Or if it's love of appearance. Then I'm going to want my kids to look a certain way. And behave in a certain way. Because I've idolized the way our family looks.

We could think of a lot of idols. But when the fear of the Lord is not there, invariably there is an idol in its place. There is something that has the chief place of our hearts.

And our parenting. Now, we don't want to parent like that. We don't want to parent like, we don't want to parent reactively.

We don't want to parent out of all of our emotions. We don't want to parent, so we're only just concerned about their behavior. But we're not concerned about their heart.

We don't want to parent with all of our idols at having the steering wheel. So, what does it look like practically in our parenting?

[8:23] How do we grow in the sense of the fear of the Lord? And how do we practice? What does it actually look like to fear the Lord in our parenting?

Well, in general, it means that, and this is really a very general statement, but in general, it means that we learn to parent by looking at how God parents us. We learn to parent from God himself. So we're submitting our minds and our hearts to him. We aren't know-it-alls. We are lifelong learners, lifelong disciples of our Father.

And that's the fear of the Lord. He's wise. He's good. He's this perfect Father. I'm not. I'm not good a lot of times.

I'm certainly not wise. I can be very foolish. I can be very short-sighted. I can do the things that we're talking about. And so I need to learn to be a better parent.

[9:37] That's just the fact. That I'm not as good of a parent as I could be. And so I'm going to go to him, and I'm going to wait on him, and I'm going to follow him.

And so what does the fear of the Lord look like as a mom or a dad? It looks like going to this book every day. It looks like going to this book daily.

It means I'm listening. Not just hearing, so to speak, but I'm listening. I'm thinking through. I'm meditating on this book.

I'm not reading it just in a cursory fashion. I'm reading it to learn. Let me ask you, what's the difference between reading to learn and just reading?

What's the difference? Does anyone read here? We need to learn.

[10:38] We need to learn. We need to learn. We need to learn. We need to learn. We need to learn. Okay. Submitting yourself. It means you're putting yourself under what he has to say. You're not the judge.

You're the student. What else? Like, practically, what does it look like if you're reading something and you're like, I need to learn this as opposed to just like you're in the doctor's office and you're flipping through the magazine.

You're just reading to waste time. What's that? What do you mean? Passing time. You don't plan on using those words and later on in the week or in your life are you reading to remember?

Yeah, you're reading to remember. Again, you're paying attention. You're reading to remember. I mean, for me, it looks like a pencil. It looks like underlining.

It looks like notes on the side of my book. It means as I'm reading, I'm also comparing what it says over here.

[11:48] What it says over there. Trying to get a big picture. Trying to understand the very details. I'm reading to learn. And the fear of the Lord for moms and dads, it means reading the Bible to learn how to be a better parent.

What kind of parent is God? What kind of father is he? And so I want to learn his values. I want to learn what he thinks. I want to know what he says. And this is what Aaron was saying. I want to learn so I can do it. So I can put it into practice. So I can pass it on. It has a very practical aim.

I mean, even when I'm reading my textbook, a textbook, and if there's no practical aim other than I want to get a good grade on the test, that still is a very practical end, isn't it?

I'm going to use this material to get an A in this class. Well, I want to read to learn. I want to read to put it to use. And so the fear of the Lord is teachability.

[12:54] It's teachability in our parenting. Good parents, bad parents. You know, I would say the difference almost, not completely, but almost, the entire difference is one's willing to learn and one isn't.

One's teachable. One's not. Good parents are learning parents. They're not perfect. I mean, like if you've been a parent for more than three weeks, you know you don't know anything going into it. You think you know a lot, but like the whole process is learning what you don't know and learning what you need to know and growing in what's important and what's not.

Good parents are always progressing. They're always learning. They're teachable. They're ready. And again, it goes back to the fear of the Lord because again, remember how the Proverbs says the beginning of wisdom, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

It's the beginning of knowledge. It's the first step. And so, of course, the first step is saying, I want to learn. I need to learn. He's much wiser than I am.

[14:10] He knows more than I do. I'm not what I should be, but he is willing to teach me. So teachability is what the fear of the Lord looks like.

It honors God. It exalts God. But know-it-alls. They don't help their kids. They don't love their children like they could.

And they certainly don't think very highly of God, but they do think very highly of themselves. Well, so what does the fear of the Lord look like?

It looks like first reading this book to learn it. But still, under this category and related to it, it means reading other good books about parenting.

And as much as you can, as much as you're able, as much as are available, studying other books. Not just books. There's lectures. There's sermons.

[15:10] There's conference messages. There's websites. There's asking other people. Asking older parents. I'm saying, you not only go to God directly through His Word, you use all the gifts that He has given.

Because God has given gifts to His church. So it's getting a whole host of advisors and teachers on your side. So it's never just you and your children or you and your spouse and your children.

It should be you and your whole team. And maybe your team is just, they live on your bookshelf. But they're still your team. By wisdom, a house is built and through understanding it is established. Through knowledge, its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures. A wise man has great power and a man of knowledge increases strength for waging war you need guidance and for victory many advisors.

So, not only the Bible but many advisors. That's what the fear of the Lord looks like in parenting. Second, so we talked about teachability and learning from God's Word and from other teachers.

[16:30] The second is prayer. What does the fear of the Lord look like? It looks like prayer. prayer for God to teach us. Again, this is teachability.

But, it's, we're talking about prayer here. About four or five months ago I was really at my wit's end with my parenting.

And I didn't know what to do and I didn't know what I was missing. And I didn't even know where to turn. Like, I had my host of advisors but none of them seemed to be saying something that would help.

I didn't know what I needed to learn. And I did know that obviously what I was doing wasn't the right thing to do. And, in all honesty, I was desperate.

I was, when I mean I was at my wit's end, I was at my wit's end. And, and so, in anguish I did pray, Lord, teach me. And I'll tell you what, that's not like shorthand for like some beautiful long prayer.

[17:36] It was just simply, Lord, I don't, teach me. I don't know what to do. And, it's interesting. James 1.5, what does James 1.5 say?

If any of you lacks wisdom, he'll give it. And, but it was like I'd never been to that low enough place where I really prayed that prayer, at least to that degree, I guess.

And, what began to happen was God began to open up new vistas, new thoughts, new understanding. Things like came, that I wasn't even looking for, ideas and thoughts and new ways of looking at things.

And, that's what happens when you pray, teach me. Teach me. That's a prayer that God answers. That's a prayer that God has promised to answer.

So, fear of the Lord in parenting, it looks like prayer. Not just prayer for learning and teachableness, but continual, dependent prayer.

[18:45] Where there's no fear of the Lord, there's no prayer. And, where there's no prayer, there's no fear of the Lord. There's just a lot of, I'm going forward, I'm going to figure this out, I'll tough it out, I'll just keep plowing ahead, but fear of the Lord in parenting looks like praying.

It looks like waiting on the Lord. Waiting. So, I'm doing what he's telling me to do, but I'm waiting for him to answer. Waiting for him to come.

It's me coming to his house as a beggar with my hands open. It's coming to him as a child, trusting he's going to give me what's right and what's good at the right time. It's more praying and less speaking.

It's more praying and less lecturing. It's more praying and less head-on confrontation. There's a place for all of those things. But when I'm fearing God, when God is big and I am small, I'm going to leave room for God to do what only God can do.

And so, I'm not going to feel like I have to control and lecture and control my kids or else I'm going to realize that God has to work here.

[20:01] And so, I'm going to pray for that. Now, third, the fear of the Lord in parenting, it looks like honest confession of our weakness and our sin, of our parenting sin.

When God is big, and I hope you're understanding what I mean by that. When I mean God is big, I mean He's, we hold Him in high esteem.

He's good. I can trust Him. His word is true. He's full of grace. He is just. He is righteous. He's powerful. He's present. All of that.

That's what I mean when I say God, when God is big, and I am little, then I'm not going to pretend like I'm perfect with my children.

That I'm perfect with them. You know, the gospel, we can keep the gospel at arm's length as long as we keep it in the theoretical.

[21:05] But the gospel is in the face of real sin. Real parenting sin. Real ugly sin. It's not theoretical sin.

It's, I've just yelled at my teenager because I'm fed up with them. And I said things I shouldn't have. And it's that kind of grace that allows us to admit that.

To come to God and confess it. But not only come to God and confess it, but come to my child and confess it. It's grace that says there's mercy for those who confess.

So we don't have to dress up like perfect parents because Jesus is our righteousness. So my parents, my parenting isn't deciding whether God will love me or not.

My parenting is not deciding whether I'll be saved or not. My parenting isn't about that because Jesus has decided that. His blood and his righteousness. And so I don't have to pretend that I'm

perfect.

[22:13] And so, you know, I would say if you're parenting and you aren't confessing your sins to your children, the sins that you've done against them, when appropriate.

But if you aren't confessing your sins to your children, you either think you have nothing to confess or you think that you can't afford to confess it.

Maybe you're looking at your relationship with your children as adversarial and confrontational where if I, like, confessing would be admitting weakness.

It'd be showing my hand. It would be showing my weakness. But, either way, where either you don't have anything to confess or you feel like you can't do it because you can't afford to, it would cost too much.

That's, either way, that's a big you and a little God. And so, what does having a big, holy, present, good God do for me? Well, it allows me to go and apologize to my teenager to ask for forgiveness.

[23:27] Not saying, I can't do that. Not saying, if I do that, that will undermine my authority or anything like that. No, I trust God. I trust God for how it's going to turn out and then I honestly say, that's what I did.

I am sorry. Will you forgive me? That's the fear of the Lord in parenting. At least, that's the beginning. So, teachability, prayer, confession.

And then, if we wanted to wrap that all up in one word, the fear of the Lord in parents looks like humility. And it's out of that spirit that we do our best parenting.

Our kids need humble parents. so, teachability, prayer, confession. Now, our second main point today is, how can we impress it upon their hearts?

How can we impress the fear of the Lord upon our children's hearts? parents? We want them to see God as exalted.

[24:42] We want them to have that feeling, that sense, that wonder, that God is big, God is good. We want to exalt God in their eyes.

So, how do we do that? How practically do we help our children have an Isaiah 40 like picture of God? Well, again, I want to divide this into three practical ways.

And the first way has to do with the time, with how we use our time, Sabbath, and prayer meeting. What we do with our time as a family, what we do with our time as a family either makes God big or it makes God look small.

what we do with our time either makes God look big to our children or makes God look small. And so, parents, as parents, who is setting the agenda, the time agenda for your family?

Who's deciding what's on the schedule? What's on the calendar? What's filling your days? What's filling your evenings? Who is deciding what is important and what is not?

[25:57] And this is a very personal thing and I understand that, but I want you to ask yourself, who is deciding the schedule for our family? Is it the school system?

Is it your children themselves? Or is it the fear of the Lord? I think in our culture, there's far too much letting the children decide their own agenda and then the whole family revolves around what the children want to do.

And I'm not sure why we think that is a good idea. We wouldn't let them spend our money however they wanted. So I'm not sure why we would let them spend the family time however they wanted.

And so, dads and moms, God put you in charge, not them. God put you in charge, not the school system. And God calls you to exercise your authority in a God-honoring way.

And so, what we spend our time on, just like what we spend our money on, shows what we think is important. And so, the way you spend time with your, as a family, is teaching your children.

[27:14] It's training your children in how you think about God. It's discipling them in a way of life with God. It's either saying God is really big and important and good, or it's just saying He's sort of important.

Or it's saying He's not really that important at all. So, listen to Leviticus 19.30. Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary.

I am the Lord. So, why should Israel have this high view of the Sabbath? Why should they have reverence for the worship of God?

Because He's God. I am the Lord. Just that bare fact that I am the Lord should win their hearts, win their time, win their reverence.

So, what you think about God translates into what you do with the Sabbath and what you do with the Lord's Day teaches your children what to think about God. And it gives them a sense of the way and the glory of God or it gives them a sense of that God is not so important or sort of important. [28:31] So, we want to teach our children to fear the Lord then I think we need to call the Sabbath day a delight and make the Lord's Day a non-negotiable priority and commitment.

Again, how you work this out is personal but I think we all need to feel the weight of what we are doing. And then, while I'm here, can I encourage you to come to prayer meeting on Wednesday if you can?

not if it's super convenient not if there's nothing better to do not if you don't if you feel like it but if you can. And again, the reason is because what we do with our time it goes into saying this is important or this is not so important and we want to use our time to impress our children with the greatness and the importance of God.

Now the second thing that's the first so how we what we do with our time the Lord's Day things like that that's the first.

The second thing I want to talk about is problems and prayers and what I mean by that is we need to learn to pray with our children through their problems. We need to learn to pray with our children right in the middle of their problems in the moments of their problems.

[29:53] we want to teach them again that God is good and that God is great and God is strong and God is gracious and God is kind we want them to have a high view of God and so how so what we do or I guess what are we doing when they have problems?

What do we what do we do when they're stumbling into sin? What do we do when they're whatever the problem might be? It could be sinful problems it could be just circumstantial problems what do we do in those moments?

Do we shape up yell shape up get your act together do we not pray do we just sort of keep going? Well we need to talk with them certainly so if our teenager is moody and cranky if our 12 year old can't get her act together and our four year old keeps disobeying we need to talk to them we maybe need to discipline them they need truth they need discipline but that's not all we need to pray with them right then right there you take them by the hand you put your hand on their shoulder you connect in other words and you say we're going to tell God about this let's go let's pray and you pray about your trouble and you ask for help and you confess your need you pray with them you take them to the throne of grace by the hand and you talk to

Jesus about it all right there with the problem in the problem now when I just want you to imagine when you are praying with your children in the middle of the problem what are you teaching them about God what are you teaching them about God he cares not 10 million miles away irrelevant doesn't care he cares what else are we teaching about God Tracy And so it's really hard for them to say, I'm sorry to each other, and then I forgive you.

So I'm trying to pray with them, to teach them, and they have it for healing that. And he loves you, no matter what you do. But you have, you know, he's trying to teach you.

[32:51] So this is what you're teaching him, that God is an approachable, gracious God. He loves him. Yes. What else are we teaching him? Very good.

That he can help. He's not weak. He has power that he can project, so to speak, right into this moment and do something to help.

What else? What else? What else? They can't change themselves. They get in the midst of bad behavior, for instance. You know, not just buck up and be a good kid.

Yeah. That's why Christ died for you. Because you can't do it on your own. Right. And so we're going to pray because, just like us, they need... You're teaching them that God is a gracious God. You're teaching them that God comes in the midst of sin and weakness and gives grace. So, pray with your children right in the middle of their problems.

[33:53] If it's not something that you've done, it might seem strange at first. But it's only strange the first or the second time. But do it.

It's a great way to say that God is here right now. He's big. He's good. He can help us. He can answer. And what we're trying to do is impress upon them.

This is our God. He can help us. Now, so that's... First is how we use our time. Secondly, pray through your problems.

Pray through their problems. Now, third, how do we impress upon them on the fear of the Lord? Don't miss everyday opportunities to remind them and teach them about God.

And I'm just going to read a little bit here. This is from Paul Tripp's book, Awe. And this is what he says about this. So, when you go to the petting zoo with your little girl, talk about the God who made every distinct characteristic of every single animal.

[34 : 59] When you bake bread, talk about how the rising of dough is just one of millions of physical and chemical processes that came out of the mind of God. When your child smells a fragrant flower, talk about how God created those smells and then gave us the organs in our body to take them in and enjoy them.

When you're hiking with your son through the woods, talk about the one who created these huge organisms with arms that reach toward the heavens. When your child is sick, talk about the one who created all the delicate interdependent systems of the body that must work in complete harmony for us to be well.

When your daughter is complaining about the rainy weather, talk about what an impossible job it would be to control the world's weather, yet God does it every day.

Have your young son make faces in the mirror and talk about how God designed all those little muscles in the face that allow us to communicate so much without saying a word.

I could give page after page of illustration after illustration. We live in the middle of an awesome, never-ending glory display. And it is our job and it should be our joy to point our children to this glory again and again, day after day.

[36 : 17] So use everyday opportunities. And I guess last week we said this, that we can't give what we don't have.

We can't point out what we don't see. And so maybe before praying, Lord, show them the fear of the Lord or show them your glory. Maybe we need to start praying, show me your glory.

Or at least pray for both. A mom or a dad who is blindfolded can't point their children to the glories of God. So we want to see these everyday opportunities.

I guess I said three, there's actually four here. Fourth, we want to teach them the fear of the Lord by actively, constantly, winsomely teaching your children the Bible.

So you actively, constantly, winsomely teach your children the Bible. So turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 6.

[37 : 19] And with this passage we are going to be done. Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 4. We looked at this a little bit last week.

I just wanted to read it for you. Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates. So, do you want to grow your children in the fear of the Lord?

[38 : 19] Well, impress this word on their hearts. And we looked at that last week. Help them memorize scripture. Pastor Bob paid his kids to memorize God's word.

Is that true? John said, maybe. The younger ones. No. I don't know. I've heard that it was, he paid quite a bit.

I don't know how much it was. He must have been poorer when you were at that stage. No, I don't know. But help them to memorize.

Read it with them. Teach them what it means. So you actively, constantly, winsomely teach your children. You. Not just me.

Not just your Sunday school teachers. Fathers, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. And you say, but I don't know what to say.

[39 : 23] I don't know enough. You better start learning. You only need to be one step ahead to teach someone. So you, actively.

That means you're doing it. You're active at it. You aren't limp. You aren't sluggish. You're actively doing it. Constantly. That's Deuteronomy 6. All the at home and in bed and getting up and going out and coming home and all the rest.

Constantly. Teaching them the word of God. Winsomely. Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

The training and instruction of the Lord shouldn't frustrate them. It shouldn't exasperate them. It shouldn't make them fed up with you. It should be happy, helpful, and encouraging.

We're pretty much out of time. But all that's a lot. All that is a lot.

[40:30] But I just want to remind us parents that we only get one chance at this. You only get to be parents with children in your home once. It doesn't go on forever.

And so we want to do a good job while the opportunity is there. So, what does the fear of the Lord look like in a parent's heart? It looks like teachableness.

It looks like prayer. It looks like confession. And how do I practically teach the fear of the Lord to my children? Well, we honor God with how we use our time. We pray in the middle of our problems.

We use everyday opportunities. And then we actively, constantly, winsomely teach our children the word of God. It's a big load. But we have a big Christ.

And Ezekiel 36, 27, I think, is a promise that is for this situation. That the Holy Spirit is in us to teach us, to inspire us, to help us to obey his commands.

[41:37] So we have a mighty Savior. We have a Holy Spirit. And we have a great Father. We have a big load. But we have a bigger God. So let's make sure that we go to him.

We are dismissed.