

FOUNDATIONS FOR PARENTING

ROB FLOOD

VITAL LIFE. SPRING 2011



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SESSION 1: FOUNDATIONS FOR THE HEART

1. Introduction (Deuteronomy 6:1-6)

2. The Meaning of “Heart”

- The “heart” is a term used to talk about the inner man...where the real “you” is.

Matthew 15:7-9 - You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain to do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.

3. Three Truths about the Heart

- The Heart is a Battleground

Genesis 3:4-5 - The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

- The Heart Worships at All Times

Matthew 6:21 - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:24 - "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other You cannot serve God and wealth.

Joshua 24:15 - "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

- The Heart is Prone to Wander

Exodus 32:1 - Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

"Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing":

O to grace how great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above.

4. A Forgetfulness of Heart (Deuteronomy 6:10-12)

The Parallel to Children

5. God's Protection (Deuteronomy 6:13-19)

6. The Heart and Parenting (Deuteronomy 6:7-9, 20-25)

- Three Parenting Themes:
 - Theme #1: Time
 - Theme #2: Conversation

- Theme #3: Knowledge

- The Fruit of a Heart-focus in our Parenting
 - Compassion:

 - Faith:

 - Strategy:

Proverbs 3:5 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart ,and do not lean on your own understanding.

Proverbs 4:23 - Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 20:5 - The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

Proverbs 23:26 - My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.

Proverbs 27:19 - As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man.

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SESSION 2: FOUNDATIONS FOR RELATIONSHIP

1. Identifying your Foundation

- Child-Centered Families: The belief that children are the center of the family universe.

- Parent-Centered Families: The belief that parents are the center of the family universe.

- Activity-Centered Families: The belief that activity is the center of the family universe.

- Christ-Centered Families: The belief that Christ is the center of the family universe.

2. Your Relationship with God

Job 12:10 – In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.

Acts 17:28 – In him we live and move and have our being.

The most important example that parents possess is their marriage. Our marriages preach. They preach a message that either attracts or repels our children. Parents who joyfully pursue God are contagious. Joyful sacrifice for the gospel is contagious. A gospel that makes parents stable, sincere, joyful, loving, affectionate, and humble is contagious. Children will want a God that produces these qualities.¹

3. The Husband / Wife Relationship

- The husband / wife roles complement each other as a cooperative team for the blessing of generations. (ex. Proverbs 1:8-9)

¹ William Farley, *Gospel Powered Parenting*, p.106)

Proverbs 1:8-9 - Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.

- The husband/wife roles are equal in importance, but different in function.
- God is the head of the husband.

1 Corinthians 11:3 - But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

- The husband is the head of the wife and is to love her as Jesus Christ loved the church.

Ephesians 5:23 - For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

- The wife is to submit to the husband in the exact way she is to submit to the Lord. She is the husband's Helper.

1 Peter 3:1-2 - In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands.

4. The Parent / Child Relationship

- Our responsibility in parenting:
 - **Modeling a real, living faith.**
 - **Teaching your children the ways of God.**
 - **Shepherding their hearts toward God.**
- God's responsibility in parenting:
 - **Your children's salvation.**
 - **The corrupt nature of your children.**
 - **Individual acts of behavior.**

5. Parenting out of Relationships

Marriage: A Reflection of Something Greater
By Rob Flood

The Bible gives us insight into the many reasons that God created marriage. While we are only going to focus on one of them here, it is a very important one and will help you not only understand marriage more.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he create them. (Genesis 1:27)

God's Purpose for Marriage

Happiness is not God's highest goal and purpose for marriage. Many times, happiness is a *part* of a healthy, God-pleasing marriage. But it is never the purpose of one and ought not be the measuring stick for one. We get a glimpse of God's purpose for marriage here in Genesis 1: to reflect God's image.

There is something about the joining together of a man and woman in marriage that uniquely reflects the image of God. You see, in this account, each day that God created, he called the creation "good." Yet, on this day, after creating then bringing together the man and the woman and uniquely reflecting his image, he called it "very good."

Marriage, then, is more than two people coming together because they love each other. It is more than finding someone who makes you happy and living with them for the rest of your life. Marriage, first and foremost, is about God. It is to reflect God to the world.

But in Ephesians 5:30 and 31, Paul is talking about marriage when he says the following:

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Here, Paul takes one of the classic Old Testament passages on marriage and says that it refers to Christ and the church. How does that work? How does marriage reflect the image of God and Christ's relationship to the church?

While we won't uncover it all. But here are a few parts we can uncover.

- ~ *Men and Women are Created Equal* – People are equal in value and in dignity, regardless of gender. One gender is not a better or higher creation than another. The union of co-equal people reflects something unique about the Trinity. Each member of the Trinity, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are equal in value. One is not "more God" than the others. And all three are joined together into one. This is the core of the saying, "the two shall become one." When people get married, God joins a separate man and a separate woman essentially into one being that functions as one...a reflection of God's image.
- ~ *Men and Women Have Different Roles* – Yes, they are equal, but that does not mean they are the same. They are valued the same, but not given the same responsibilities. While gender is a poor basis for judging value, it is one of the main distinctions for

different roles. God's wisdom in creating man first and assigning them roles accordingly reveals an intentionality to God's purposes.

As a man and woman willingly accept their roles in marriage, they are reflecting something very powerful about God.

- ~ *A Man's Role Reflects the Love and Leadership of Christ* – Ephesians 5:25-32 plainly lays out before men their job description in marriage: “Love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” A man who truly fulfills his calling as a husband is reflecting the image of God in the love, care, and protection of Christ over the church.

Throughout the Bible, the love and care of God for his people is a key theme. From the pillar of fire leading them through the desert to the tender promise of Christ, declaring that he'll never leave nor forsake his church, faithful love and guidance are characteristic of God. This type of care from God to his people speaks volumes of God's character. And a man has the distinct duty and privilege of reflecting that part of God to the world.

- ~ *A Woman's Role Reflects the Serving and Submission of God* – There is a term attached to the creation of woman in Genesis 2...it is the term “helper” or “helpmeet.” This is how God designates her role in the life of her husband. The wife is to be the helper of the husband.

We may think that this term is secondary or demeaning. Quite the opposite. This term, “helper” is used many times to refer to God himself. In as much as the man's role reflects Christ's relationship to the church, the woman's role reflects God's care for his people. By using the same title given to God himself, the woman as she fulfills her call to be a helper, reflects the image of God.

Additionally, several places in the Bible reveal that Christ, who was fully God, submitted to the will of the Father. Perhaps most notably, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ's prayer, “Not my will but yours be done” reveals this amazing truth. (Luke 22:42)

As a woman willingly accepts her role and submits to her husband, she is reflecting this attribute that is inherent to the Trinity itself.

Marriage is far bigger than we think. There is far more hanging in the balance than happiness. As it relates to human relationships, nothing is more important than marriage and nothing better reflects God than a healthy marriage.

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SESSION 3: FOUNDATIONS FOR DISCIPLINE

1. Introduction

- Trap #1: Discipline is Punishment

- Trap #2: Trusting in Discipline

- Trap #3: Limiting Discipline to the Rod

2. The Good of Discipline (Hebrews 12:5-10)

3. The Goal of Discipline (Hebrews 12:11)

- Righteousness

- Fruit

- Peaceful

4. The Grace of Discipline (Hebrews 12:12-15)

- Here are some examples of unhelpful and damaging things we can sometimes say:

- “You always...” or “You never...”

- “Your brother / sister never does this...”

- “What are you, stupid?”

- “You’re hopeless.”

- And here are some examples of helpful things we can say:
 - “I love you.”

 - “Do you understand what we’ve just talked about?”

 - “I struggle with the same thing.”

 - “You are a blessing to me and our family.”

5. Putting the Pieces Together

Foundations for Parenting

The Rod: How We Do It

By Rob Flood

On April 16th, I taught a class called *Foundations for Parenting*. It consisted of three sessions: *Foundations of the Heart*, *Foundations for Relationships*, and *Foundations for Discipline*. In that third session, the broader context for discipline was taught. In an effort to help parents who are new to the biblical teaching of parenting younger children, this article is provided as an example. It is not authoritative and ought not be followed as though it is. It is simply an example of one family's efforts to live out the biblical teaching on the subject. I hope it helps.

When this perspective is new to people, they often want to know what it looks like in action. They also want to know if it really works. Let me walk you through what this looks like in my family. Yours may look different, but you'll see the elements that are necessary.

1. *We find a private place.* When my children sin or disobey, it is necessary for me to bring about discipline. The best way to do this is in private. This allows them to maintain dignity and prevents them from feeling humiliated in front of others. (The only time we go against this principle is when the children are very young. With a child younger than 2 ½ to 3 years old, we often will bring the discipline as close to the action as possible.) To do this, we ask our children to go to a secluded place, most likely their bedroom.

2. *We confirm the reason for the discipline.* Once upstairs, I ask them if they know why they are being disciplined. This is important—if a child receives discipline but is not sure why, the entire purpose is lost. If they are unaware of why, then I help them understand, but usually, even with the little ones, they already know exactly what happened.

3. *We apply the rod.* In order to keep this portion of discipline within biblical guidelines, we must consider a few key ingredients. First, we must choose the item to use. Different parents use different items as their “rod” of discipline. There is no “right” item. We make sure that the item will have the desired effect while doing no damage to the child. Second, the place on their bodies is key. We *always* strike a very meaty part of their bodies—predominantly their backsides. When they are wearing heavier clothing like blue jeans, we may strike the back of a thigh, also a very meaty part.

Third is the amount of discipline. The number of swats they receive relates in part to the seriousness of the sin. I don't mean the seriousness of the action. Throwing food at the table is disobedient. So too is a defiant “NO!” The root sin is disobedience and the number of swats is the same for both. Now, punching a brother in the eye receives more because of the increased danger they posed to the family. That is more serious.

4. *We comfort them in their discomfort.* When we are done with the spanking, they are generally uncomfortable. I often rub the part that was swatted and I always embrace them. God comforts us in our affliction and so we ought do the same for our children. This is often a silent time (except for the crying.) I don't want to be preached at when I am hurting so we don't do that to our children.

5. We instruct. After the rod, the children tend to be more pliable and able to listen. This is where we attempt to restore them with the gospel. Through love and acceptance, we share with them the wonderful opportunity we have for forgiveness and the great gift of mercy available to us in the cross.

6. We pray for them. We always thank God for them and ask him to help them by the power of his Spirit in the area of their sin. We try as best we can to avoid the temptation to preach to through our praying.

7. We have them pray. They not only sinned against us (or a sibling), but they also sinned against God. So, when they pray, they acknowledge their sin before God and ask his forgiveness and his help in the future.

8. We love them. Before letting them go, we hug them. We tell them that we love them again. Sometimes we'll pinch a child's nose, tweak a cheek, or tickle his belly. We always try to do something that reminds them that everything is okay and that their sin has been separated from them.

9. We have them seek out the people involved. This final step is seeking out the forgiveness of those they've sinned against. This almost invariably starts with us, since it was our authority they rebelled against. This should not be a quick heartless, "I'm sorry." That is not seeking forgiveness. It can vary, but it must always include a question like, "Will you forgive me for...?"

Discipline can look different in every family. However, I hope this look at how it is done in our family has been helpful to you as you envision how you might carry out the forgotten part of discipline with your children.

In the end, the "how-to" is not nearly as important as the environment of love you create for your children. Take some time and evaluate your heart as you consider discipline in your family. Correct anything you find that fails to rescue them from their sin and restore them to a right relationship with you and with God.

*Additional note: The purpose of this article is to provide an example of what this might look like in one family's practice. The article is not intended to give a comprehensive view of discipline. However, it must be said that discipline on the whole, and the rod in particular, must **never** occur when the parent is angry. Too much is at stake to allow anger to overtake the situation. When you are angry, I suggest taking 10 or 20 minutes to calm down and pray. If need be, allow the opportunity for the rod to pass rather than proceed in anger. You cannot achieve God's purposes for discipline if you are sinning against your children in your anger.*

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RECOMMENDED READING LIST

KEY BOOKS ON PARENTING

- Shepherding a Child's Heart, Tedd Tripp (Shepherd Press: Wapwallopen, PA) 1995.
- Gospel-Powered Parenting, William P. Farley (P&R Publishing: Phillipsburg, NJ) 2009.

KEY BOOKS ON THE HEART

- Keeping the Heart, John Flavel (Puritan Classic: available in many print formats)
- How People Change, Paul Tripp & Timothy Lane (New Growth Press: Greensboro, NC) 2006.

OTHER WORTHY READING

- The Family, J.R. Miller [formally published under the title Homemaking] (The Vision Forum: San Antonio, TX) 2003. originally published 1883.
- "Don't Make Me Count to Three!", Ginger Plowman (Shepherd Press: Wapwallopen, PA) 2003.
- Instructing a Child's Heart, Tedd Tripp (Shepherd Press: Wapwallopen, PA) 2008.