

Shaping Our Children's Values **Psalm 32:8-11; Proverbs 3:1-4**

Last Sunday, as we launched our Star Trek themed VBS, I raised the question, "What is it about our faith that we most want to communicate to our children?"

This being Father's Day, I want to travel down a similar path this morning and talk about the VALUES we're passing along to our children. Faith and values should be closely connected.

So let's talk about "Shaping Our Children's Values." This is one of our responsibilities as parents and grandparents—and also as a church: giving shape to the values that may well influence our children's attitudes and actions for the rest of their lives.

Look with me, please, at a couple of Scripture passages which speak to this:

Psalm 32:8-11 ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. ⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. ¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. ¹¹ Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Proverbs 3:1-4 ¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart,

² for they will prolong your life many years
and bring you prosperity.

³ Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.

⁴ Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.

These passages speak to us about teaching our children. The Psalmist warns us not to be "stubborn as mules," as they say, because "Many are the woes of the wicked..."

The writer of Proverbs takes a more positive approach, telling his son that remembering his teachings and commandments will help him to live a long and prosperous life.

But neither approach is guaranteed to work. Ultimately, each child must decide what he or she values in life. It's just that moms and dads, along with other relatives, and teachers and preachers and many more can have tremendous influence over the shape those values take in the lives of our children.

As you know, we're not the only ones trying to influence their values. The world in which we live often counteracts what we try to teach them. But, then, that's been true for a very long time. Listen, for instance, to how God tries to get this across to His people in Old Testament days:

"Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many..."
Deuteronomy 11:18-20

God's telling us that this is important. "In everything you do," He's saying, "saturate your children with my words. Write them on the doorframes and walls of your houses so that every place they turn, they'll see them." It's that important!

This being the case, what are those values that we should be "shaping" into the lives of our children? I hope you have a list already, but I want to suggest to you several values that need to be included for dads and moms who are seeking to follow Christ and honor Him through the ways in which we're raising our children.

I. First of all, Value God as the source of all things. The Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." As Christians, we believe that God is the Source of everything that is.

We got into this last week, so I won't plow the same ground again today—only to say that this is important. If we believe that God is God, that He is our Creator, then we begin to understand that we should live life according to His design.

Sometimes this view is countered with a "secular faith" that claims

we're not here on purpose, but by some cosmic accident. According to this philosophy, the world and everything in it "just happened." We are who and what we are today strictly by chance.

I think that takes more faith than believing in a Creator. Paul says, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--His eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

A little boy was asked if he believed in God. He answered, "Yes I do." When asked why, he said, "Well, I guess it just runs in my family." I hope faith runs in our families too.

II. The second value is closely related to the first: Value the earth as God's creation. "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it," says the Psalmist (24:1). And Genesis tells us, "God saw all that He made and it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and told them in effect, 'You're the managers, the caretakers, of this garden. All the animals that are here are under your jurisdiction. All the plants are yours as well. Use them and take care of them.'

But people go in two different directions on this. There are some who not only over-use, but abuse God's good creation. We're witnessing a very sad example of this unfolding right now down in the Gulf. God surely doesn't want His world destroyed in this way.

On the other hand, there are those who seem to worship the creation instead of the Creator. They are more concerned about the whales, spotted owls, or rain forests than they are about the God who made them or the people He assigned to care for them.

From a Biblical perspective, we teach our children that this world is created by God, and God has given us the responsibility to use His creation without abusing it. We can find the right balance if we will simply take seriously the teachings we find in God's word.

III. Value all people as made in the image of God. "...God said, 'Let us make man in our image.'" As Christians, we believe that God created all humankind in His image, and 'red and yellow, black and white, they are all precious in His sight.' We must live this in our lives and teach this to our children.

IV. Value the Bible as God's truth for our lives. "All Scripture is God-breathed..." (II Tim. 3:16). We believe that God reveals Himself to us through His Holy Word so that we can then have fellowship with Him.

The Bible teaches us how to be forgiven of sin and to enter into a relationship with God which will span all eternity. We love the Bible and believe that it's truthful and trustworthy.

George Barna conducted a survey awhile back and found that 72% of the people he surveyed do not believe that there is any absolute truth. That's disturbing, isn't it? If there's no absolute truth, then there is nothing to tell us what's right and wrong. That leads to chaos eventually, which is exactly what we find so often in our world today.

If we believe that the Bible is God's word and that what it says is authoritative for our lives, we'll make it our aim to also pass this value along to our children.

V. Value the family as God's plan for our lives. "A man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." There is intentionality about this arrangement. God knows it's best for us, and He intends for us to take these family relationships seriously.

We must teach our children that marriage is sacred, that children are a gift from God, and the family is important enough for us to devote a large measure of our time, and love, and devotion to it.

Society has so watered down the meaning of family today, we hardly know what it is anymore. In the process, we don't value family like we once did.

We're losing something very precious, so I encourage us to go against the grain and cherish our family relationships and instill the importance of family as God has designed it into the lives of our children.

VI. Value the church as the people of God. When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus said, "Upon this rock, I will build my church." Paul spoke of the church as the "body of Christ." The church is obviously something God intends for us to value and to pass on to our children.

The world says, "We'll tolerate the church as long as it stays over in a corner doing its thing. Just don't try to influence the rest of us." But

we've been called to be witnesses to the world, so that others might come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

God's people are to be like yeast in the dough. The church seeks to influence the community in which it's planted. This is our calling in Christ, and we value who we are and the mission we've been given. It's yet another value we need to intentionally shape into the lives of our children.

VII. Value government as another establishment of God. Some of you were not expecting this one, but Romans 13:1 says, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established."

As good citizens, Christians are to obey the laws of the land. We are to seek to live in peace with all people. Now, we shouldn't do anything that we believe goes against our Christian principles. But as long as the laws don't force us to do something that we believe clearly goes against God's will for our lives, we are to live in peace and obey the law.

When our children got old enough to understand and remember what they were seeing and hearing, Pam and I took them to Washington, DC. We toured the capital building and the White House. We went out to Arlington National Cemetery, saw the long rows of tombstones, and talked about the price of freedom.

We discussed civil rights and the struggles that some went through to obtain their freedom in a land that claimed to value freedom for all. We talked about the sufferings Baptists endured to obtain religious freedom and to end the practice that existed in many of our states of favoring one religion over another.

Baptists paid a high price in their efforts to separate the church from the state and to gain assurances that in this free land, the two would remain separate. It's a shame today that so many of us either never learn about, or choose to ignore, our history and the sacrifices that were made to obtain our freedoms.

Teach the children to value the rights and freedoms afforded us in this nation, to be grateful for the sacrifices others have made to obtain them and to protect them for the rest of us.

Teach them to resist the kind of re-writing of history that obscures the reasons we must be just as vigilant in protecting the rights and

freedoms of others—yes, even for those with whom we disagree—as we are in insisting on these rights and freedoms for ourselves.

If we are to shape our children’s lives around these and the many other values that grow out of our commitment to Christ, then we will need to be totally committed to Him ourselves. Children are quite good at picking up on the inconsistencies in our lives.

If we come to church and act one way, then go home and live as if we’ve never “darkened the door,” our children will get a very different message than the one we ought to be sending them. They won’t take much of anything we say seriously—and for good reason.

One of the hardest places to be Christian is in our homes...because that’s where we take off all the disguises and become who we really are. So when the masks are removed, make sure what’s still there is Christian--dads and moms who clearly love the Lord and seek to honor Him with their lives and families.

Let’s make sure we are building loving relationships with our children in the process. As Josh McDowell used to say in his parenting seminars, “Rules without a relationship lead to rebellion.”

And know also that your church is here to help you in this. Your Pastor and staff, your teachers, deacons, musicians and mission leaders and more—we’re all here to help one another in learning and living out the values we share as we faithfully follow Christ Jesus.

Friends, something I always knew as I was growing up over in Simpsonville, SC—I knew that my mom and dad loved the Lord, they loved His church, and they loved me. And just like my Heavenly Father, they wanted only the very best for my life.

This assurance opened the door for them to shape values in my life that I cherish to this day—values that continue to keep my life pointed in the right direction. This is now my responsibility and yours.

This is also my privilege and yours. And listen: there are few things in life that we will be able to look back upon with greater satisfaction than to know that we gave this our best, and with God’s help, did it well.