

Child Dedication Seminar

“Loving Your Child”

I. The foundation of loving our children is the unconditional, unshakable, inseparable, eternal love of God for his children.

Psalm 36:5 Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

Psalm 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

Is. 54:10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

Psalm 100:5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Romans 5:5-8 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. ⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 8:31ff What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

II. Our children must see a reflection of the love of God that has been poured out into our hearts.

John 13:34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

I Cor. 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails.

III. Loving our children means seeing beyond the external behavior into the heart.

Eph. 3:14-19 For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your head, for it is the wellspring of life.

Mark 7:20-23 He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ ²¹For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”

Luke 6:43-45 “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his head, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his head. For out of the overflow of his head his mouth speaks.

IV. Some practical considerations

1. Each child is created with an individual dignity as he is created in the image of God. He should be treated accordingly.

2. The most loving thing parents can do is put the gospel message into the hearts of their children. (Deut. 6; Eph. 6:4)

3. Though discipline is expected in parenting, the parents' attitude and tone of voice communicate volumes to the reason behind it. Is it compelled by love or revenge? Is the goal godliness or is it family pride? (James 1:19-20; Proverbs 3:12; 13:24; Heb. 12: 5-11)

4. Love them by not "provoking them to anger." Consider this list by John MacArthur:
 - a. Overprotection: communicates a lack of trust
 - b. Overindulgence: they instinctively know that these actions are unloving.
 - c. Favoritism: every child is unique and there is nothing more humiliating and frustrating than being demeaned or debased by an unkind comparison.
 - d. Unrealistic Goals: constantly pushing achievement produces a self-destructive rage.
 - e. Discouragement: caused by constant criticism with very little affirmation. (See Quote below)
 - f. Neglect: failing to show them affection, communicating that they are an intrusion rather than a blessing (Ps. 127).
 - g. Condescension: not letting them express their ridiculous ideas and experiment thinking for themselves; hammering them for childish mistakes.
 - h. Withdrawing love: communicating that your love is based on their performance and could be withdrawn as punishment. "that's such a good little girl! Mommy loves you when you're so good."
 - i. Excessive Discipline: constantly riding kids and hanging corporal punishment over their heads teaches them to fear man, not God.

Haim Ginott as quoted by John MacArthur: "A child learns what he lives. If he lives with criticism he does not learn responsibility. He learns to condemn himself and to find fault with other. He learns to doubt his own judgment, to disparage his own ability, and to distrust the intentions of others. And above all, he learns to live with continual expectation of impending doom."

5. Loving your child begins with loving God and your spouse. (Deut. 6: 4-8; Eph. 5: 22-33; Mt. 19: 1-9)

Take Home Questions

Do we, as a couple, seek first the kingdom of God? How can we grow in this area?

How are we doing in loving each other with a biblical love? How do our attitudes line up with the description of love in 1 Cor. 13?

What did our parents do in regard to moral training? Did they emphasize good behavior more than the gospel? In what ways? How can we train our children with a gospel-centered approach?

What tendencies do we have that could provoke our children to anger?

Discuss how we can implement discipline which is motivated by love and carried out with a loving disposition.

Recommended Reading

Tripp, Tedd Shepherding a Child's Heart.

MacArthur, John Successful Christian Parenting: Raising Your Child with Care, Compassion and Common sense.

Chapell, Bryan Each for the Other: Marriage as It's Meant to Be.

Eggerichs, Dr. Emerson: Love and Respect