



Living the Sermon as a Parent

Brownsburg Church of Christ

by Edwin Crozier

December 23, 2012

PM Assembly



Introduction:

I think every single parent listening to this lesson wants their kids to grow up to be kingdom citizens. If so, we need to learn how to live the kingdom manifesto, the Sermon on the Mount in our parenting. In our last lesson, we learned about living the sermon in our marriages. Let's consider another aspect of home life: parenting. No doubt, if I live the sermon as a parent, I will incorporate the lessons we learned about marriage, living in love, communicating honestly, being committed, being angry appropriately, and serving instead of retaliating. However, there are some great principles we don't often think about in the rest of the Sermon that I think can guide our parenting.

Discussion:

I. Don't use your parenting to show off (**Matthew 6:1-18**).

- A. In **Matthew 6:1-18**, Jesus uses three illustrations of people trying to show off their spirituality. They might blow trumpets before themselves when they help someone in need, they might stand on the street corner or conspicuously in the synagogue to be seen praying, or they might make it completely obvious that they are fasting. They aren't doing any of this so someone might see the glory of God. Rather, they were doing it so others would see them and notice how spiritual they are.
- B. Sadly, there are too many Christians who treat their parenting just like this. They are in an unending competition with all the other parents around them. They argue and fuss about the different ways to raise kids and then they set their kids on display so everyone else will know that they are the best at raising kids. In this mindset, every parenting decision becomes a competition. Parents compete about whether or not to bottle feed or nurse, cloth diaper or disposable, home school or public school, co-sleep or independent sleep. They bicker and argue about which decision is the best and then they set their kids up to be the public display of their parenting. Sadly, they don't really make these decisions for the child's benefit. They make it to prove their own spirituality so everyone will compliment them on what great kids they raised.
- C. I'm not saying it is wrong to brag on your kids. I'm not saying it's wrong to share with others the really neat thing your child has just done. I'm not saying it is wrong to have parental pride for your children. The point is if we are raising our kids with the mindset of attracting attention for how good we are doing at it, we aren't living the Sermon as parents. Quietly parent your children as best you know how. Train them to glorify God. Point others to God if they notice something good in your family. If you are in the parenting competition trying to receive the accolades of men over your kids, that is the only reward you're going to get.

II. Seek God's kingdom first (**Matthew 6:33**).

- A. When I was preparing this lesson, I was in Starbucks sharing a table with a young father and his son's baseball coach. Apparently the son, who was not present, has some talent as a pitcher. The father and the coach were talking about this boy's pitching future. They hope he'll devote himself to pitching so he can play high school ball, then college. No doubt dreams of professional pitching are in their eyes. They were talking about different levels of little league ball, potentially pursuing the little league world series. Then they were talking about all the time someone this boy's age needed to devote if he really wanted to excel at pitching. They were talking about the time before school devoted to lifting weights, doing cardio, and throwing the ball. Then the time needed to be spent in the gym after school. No doubt every bit of this is true. This father is certainly putting a priority on baseball for his son. He's looking into the future and wanting to provide for him the best shot ever at pursuing baseball. On the one hand, this can probably be done properly.
- B. However, let's just say this young man prioritizes baseball, advances from high school ball to college ball to minor league ball to professional ball. Let's just say he is a Cy Young award winner, leads his team to multiple World Series wins, and is admitted into the baseball hall of fame. He retires by age 40 and lives off the wealth he amassed in his few years of play. Then he dies. What next?
- C. In our entertainment based society and money driven culture, we far too often think we are doing our kids favors when we help them learn to prioritize being a famous money-maker. No doubt, as our kids idolize those folks, they think it is great. But what is that going to provide for them? A lot of money? A lot of fame? A lot of admirers? For how long? 10 years? 20? If they are really good they may even be remembered all their lives and get to throw out the first pitch of the season even in their 70s. But what about eternity?

What is it going to provide for them then? Preparing our kids for life in the real world is important, yes. But preparing them for eternity is even more important. We need to seek first God's kingdom (**Matthew 6:33**). We need to train our kids to seek first the kingdom. We need to help them know and pursue the one necessary thing (cf. **Luke 10:42; Philippians 3:7-11**).

- D. Let's face it; no matter what we train our children to pursue, they will have to learn priorities. Another day, I overheard another father trying to work out a schedule for his daughter. The problem was that she was playing both basketball and volleyball, perhaps even softball. There was a conflict with the way practices and games were scheduled. He was making phone calls to league commissioners and coaches trying to get games moved, practices rescheduled, different venues opened for practices so his daughter could make them all. But at one point, he made the comment that basketball took the priority. If there was a conflict, the other coaches were just going to have to understand that. Now there is a parent who cares about his daughter and basketball. What the Sermon demonstrates is we need parents who care about their children and the kingdom of the Lord. For some people, basketball comes first. For some people education comes first. For some people recreation comes first. For some people choir and band come first. For some people work comes first. For the kingdom citizen, God's kingdom comes first. It is the priority and the overarching pursuit to which all other pursuits submit. No matter what you do, you will teach your kids to put something first. If you will live the Sermon as you are parenting, you will teach them to put the kingdom first.

III. Lay up treasure in heaven (**Matthew 6:19-21**).

- A. Too many parents spend too much time trying to provide financially for their kids. Certainly, if a man won't provide for his family, he is worse than an unbeliever (**I Timothy 5:8**). But the parents who spend all their time laying up treasures on earth and training the children to do the same will likely raise unbelievers. No doubt, it seems worthwhile for a time when the parent is able to pass on the best clothes, the nicest house, cool cars, personal computers, gizmos, gadgets, toys, etc. Christmas seems like fun in these houses. But remember that all of these things will rust, break down, or become obsolete. They provide nothing that lasts.
- B. Rather, pass on to your kids the treasure that is in heaven. Pass on to them the knowledge of Jesus. Pass on to them the knowledge of God's Word. Pass on to them the habits of prayer, of teaching, of praising God, of serving others. As **Deuteronomy 6:7-9** demonstrates, passing on this kind of generational legacy takes time. Frankly, it will take time away from making money. You may pass on a love for the family business to your children; the question is are you passing on a love for the family Savior?
- C. Certainly, if God has blessed you with financial blessings, there is no shame in that. There are plenty who have maintained proper balance and the Lord has granted them abundance. Remember Paul's admonition through Timothy for these folks, "They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life" (**I Timothy 6:18-19**). When that is your case, don't be satisfied with enjoying your wealth and passing it on to your kids. Teach them to store up treasures in heaven by generously helping those less blessed. God has blessed you to be a blessing to others (cf. **II Corinthians 8:13-14**). Don't let your children believe your blessings are merely for them. Let them see you share and be generous with others. Let them learn to be generous from you.

IV. Don't be anxious about tomorrow (**Matthew 6:34**).

- A. This is tough. But if you are like me, you spend most of today worrying about tomorrow. I remember when I was a senior in high school there was some special event, I can't remember which one it was, but my parents gave special dispensation to me to stay up on a Saturday night as long as I wanted to go out with my friends. I drank so many cokes I got the shakes, but still I was getting sleepy. So I bought some caffeine pills. I finally came home at something like 4 or 5 AM. I just laid on my bed, fully dressed wanting to get an hour or two of sleep before time to get up for Bible class and the assembly. When my dad passed the room, he saw me laying on the bed with the bottle of caffeine pills beside me. For the next 30 minutes I learned that caffeine pills would lead to more energy pills, which would lead to uppers so I could stay up studying in college, which would lead to downers to help me get back to sleep, which would lead to more and more drugs, which would lead to crime to pay for the drugs, which would lead to jail, which would lead to... You would have thought I was laying on the bed next to a crack pipe. At the time, I thought he was crazy. I was 16 and had bought some caffeine pills and he was worried that I was going to be a junkie in jail. I didn't listen to a thing he said that morning other than to repeat how crazy my dad was in stories like this one.

- B. Today I get it. I don't know how many times I catch myself telling my kids what they are going to be when they grow up because of some mistake or decision they've made when they're 5, 10, 13, or 15. It makes perfect sense to me.
 - C. However, the problem I've seen is that when I spend too much time worrying about the future, I end up acting in ways that produce the future I was worried about. When I fear that a minor "caffeine pill mistake" is essentially the same as a "shooting someone to support a drug habit" mistake, I end up treating my kids in ways that push them farther and farther away from me and closer and closer to the things I fear. Playing out the tape of the future and reacting today based on what you fear it will turn into in the future, keeps you from addressing properly what has happened today.
 - D. If your child did something wrong today, deal with it appropriately. Don't dismiss it because it is not as bad as what might happen in the future. But don't be so scared of the future that you overreact to today's trouble. Today's mistake is not going to define your kids forever, unless you start defining them that way based on your future-based anxieties.
- V. Think about the fruit, not the moment (**Matthew 7:15-20**).
- A. This balances out our last point; it doesn't contradict it. In the previous point, I'm concerned about overreacting today based on your anxieties about your child's future. In this point, I'm concerned about not acting today because you are thinking more about how you feel in this moment than about the fruit of your child's behavior.
 - B. According to **Hebrews 12:11**, discipline in the moment feels painful (not just for the disciplined, but also for the discipliner). But there is a fruit it produces. It produces the fruit of righteousness. There are sometimes where I just don't want to deal with it. I'm exhausted, distracted, distressed, depressed, whatever and I don't want to deal with the discipline. If that happens on occasion, perhaps I won't cause too much damage. But if that becomes a habit, my kids are going to be in trouble. Other times I'm thinking only about their momentary response. If I discipline them right now, they'll hate me. I'll be the bad guy. Clearly they won't like it. But in time, they will likely come to appreciate the proper discipline that is administered.
 - C. Of course, this isn't just about discipline. It's about time. One of these days your child is going to leave home (hopefully) and you won't get those moments to teach, train, share, model, and mentor. Think about the fruit of your choices in these moments. When you decide to watch the news or read the newspaper rather than spending some together time with your kids, you'll never get that moment back again. Certainly, every parent needs some alone time, some relax time, some refresh time. But don't just think about the moment right now. Think about the fruit of how you are spending that moment in relationship to your child.
- VI. Work on yourself first (**Matthew 7:3-5**).
- A. One of the scariest things I've ever heard about parenting is from John Maxwell who once said, "You teach what you know; you reproduce what you are." Why is it that my kids pick up on the worst parts of me so much more readily than the best parts?
 - B. What this really drives home is if I want to help my kids the most, I have to work on me first. I can't pull the speck out of their eyes when I have a humongous log in my eye. We often think of this simply in terms of hypocrisy. That is, I'm doing the same thing they are. But that is not always the case. The log is anything that hinders my view to be able to help my children. If my own inferiority complex causes me to be mean to my kids because they are making me look bad, I'm not going to be able to help them. If my arrogance and pride causes me to think my kids can never do wrong, I'm not going to help them. If my own sense of failure causes me to interpret every request and statement as an accusation, I will not be able to help my kids when they need it; I'll just be depressed about their own shortcomings as a further sign of my own failure. I need to work on me. As I remove the logs from my eyes, I'll be able to help them with the specks in theirs.
 - C. In **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**, God demonstrated that the first principle of parenting is to love the Lord God with all of our heart, soul, and might before we turn to teach our children. We may tell them all the right things, but if we aren't living it, our lives will speak more loudly than our words. We will teach them what we know, but we will produce in them what we are.

Conclusion:

Parenting is a tough job. However, if I learn to be a kingdom citizen even at home, I'll give my children an advantage in the kingdom. Obviously, our children are free agents. We can do it all right and they still go wrong. But as much as depends on us, let's live this Sermon in our parenting.